



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION MScHRM PROGRAM

**UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE: THEIR IMPACT ON
EMPLOYEES**

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Introduction

The purpose of the present research is the investigation and interpretation of the way in which some of the unconscious biases affect our perception and decision-making both in our daily lives but especially in the workplace and how these biases can affect the perception and behavior of employees. It examines the strategy with which the unconscious biases are used in the workplace and especially on employees and whether research subjects are aware of their influence in decision-making. Unconscious-bias testing of employees, is an essential step for organizations to identify situations in which discrimination is likely to occur, taking precautionary measures to avoid or reduce such discrimination in the workplace. Controlling unconscious bias by employers is both necessary to prevent the influence of unconscious bias on employment decisions and to address the unconscious tendencies of their employees. An electronic questionnaire was given, which was sent to targeted online groups of employees, working in organizations either the public or private sector. Its purpose is to deduce and compare the results with the existing bibliography. It investigates whether and to what extent the subjects of the research are aware that they are affected by unconscious biases in their workplace. Specifically, using the Likert scale, the subjects will indicate their level of agreement with the questions we asked them, by choosing one of the five categories that follow each statement such as: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree. Through the Likert scale, we will examine if the subjects' first impression about their colleagues or candidates during interviews affects how they feel and think about his or her character. If the words used in a job description can prevent them from sending their CV or influence the decision on which candidate is the most suitable. If and how much it is important for them to be sure that the new person that will be added to the team is the right one and they would like him/her, if they will evaluate this person more positively if he/she has the same values, habits and beliefs as the team and if they would notice and remember more detailed information about interview candidates or their colleagues who are similar to them. In addition, they were asked if their judgments about the performance of other people are influenced by the performance judgments that others have previously made about them or by their mood. It was examined if they are aware of the unconscious gender bias and the effect that changes in their workplace can have on them. Finally, it investigates if they believe that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded and if they believe that if they put more effort and work more

hours, these actions will be recognized. It appears from the results that the subjects are aware that their overall impression of a person affects how they feel and think about his or her character. Subjects state that the words used in a job description cannot prevent them from sending their CV or influence the decision on which candidate is the most suitable. They are aware that it is important for them to be sure that the new person that will be added to the team is the right one and they will like him/her and that the more similarities the new person has with the team (including values, habits and beliefs), the more positively they will evaluate him/her. In case this person is similar to them, they will remember more detailed information about him/her but if he/she is different from them they will not remember more detailed information about him/her. Their judgement about other people's performance, they claim, is not affected by the performance judgments that others have previously made about them or by their mood. There seems to be no awareness of the fact that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women, but they are aware of the fact that women who are mothers have not the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men. They are not aware that they may be afraid of change because they are worried that they will fail or that they may lose their job. They believe excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded as well as that they believe that if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized. Finally, the results of the test made on the median of the gender, showed that women compared to men, were more likely to claim that men have more opportunities to receive promotion compared to women, but on the contrary, men believe to a greater extent that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization. The test made on the median of the position, showed that employees' judgement about the performance of other people, are more affected by the performance judgments that others have previously made about them, compared to managers. Employees oppose change more as they fear they may lose their job, compared to managers who are less afraid of losing their job. Managers would not search for another job, compared to employees who would change their jobs more easily. Finally, managers believe more that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded and if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized, compared to employees.

Key-words: Unconscious biases, workplace, employees, perception, decision-making, awareness

1. Literature review

1.1 Unconscious Bias

According to Kanellaki (2004), "knowing how to think, is a skill that belongs to each of us. It allows us to make predictions, solve problems, draw conclusions or even make judgments and decisions" (p. 13).

Human thinking is not governed by the rules of formal logic and therefore the person has reservations knowing the possibility of error or deception. This often leads to alertness of his critical sense, avoiding mistakes or inaccuracies, but this is not happen in all cases.

It is a common feature of a person's daily thoughts, to resort to errors / prejudices / biases, it is something that the person cannot easily recognize as a mistake and does not realize that it is something that needs to change. The person often "falls victim" to his distorted thinking, but does not seem to be able to escape from such mistakes.

1.1.1 Information- Knowledge

Each individual's thoughts and actions, depend essentially on his/her knowledge. Every person's knowledge is directly related to the information he/she receives or possesses and the way he/she processes it.

As Miller (1956) support that all views converge on the acceptance that the human cognitive system has a limited capacity and finds it difficult to process a lot of information at the same time, at least on a conscious level. Every form of communication activity is affected both by the amount of information and by the way in which the individual exploits the limited capacity of the cognitive system. When the mind is overwhelmed by unconnected information, or by more information than can be processed simultaneously at a time, cognitive performance decreases (Frederiksen, 1983).

A person with rich, valid and well-organized knowledge has the advantage that he can take full advantage of the limited capacity of his memory, reducing the processing load and increasing the speed. Undoubtedly, this person has a better equipment against information overload and exhaustion or inactivity (Davou, 2000, pp. 308). Since a person's cognitive abilities are limited he

must use them in an effective way. She continues, emphasizing that this person must be able to exclude what can be excluded in order to concentrate on what is most important (or interesting) at the moment (p. 335).

Information, according to Kanellaki (2004), "is produced and transmitted as a commodity, which aims to attract attention and is consumed hastily by people who must always be aware of everything" (p. 232). The hasty correlation and interpretation of information for the production of knowledge results in the recording of this knowledge, being inherently defective since under different conditions some information from it could have been rejected as unnecessary and useless.

1.1.2 Perceptual blindness- Consequences of the illusion of attention in our daily lives

Attention is defined as the ability to select certain stimuli, which will then be processed. The choice arises from the fact that attention is a path of limited information processing capacity (Kostaridou-Eukleidi, 1992).

Our neurological circuits for vision and attention are made for speeds of walking, not driving. When we walk, a delay of a few seconds in marking an unexpected event probably passes without serious consequences. On the other hand, when we drive, even a tenth of a second delay in marking the unexpected event can cost our lives or someone else's life (Chabris & Simons, 2011, pp. 75-76). People are confident that they can drive and talk on their cell phones at the same time, precisely because they are almost never faced with any proof that they cannot. Chabris and Simons (2011), believe that only a personal experience such as a crash, which was clearly caused by the attenuation of attention and which cannot be justified as the fault of the other person, can to reduce their self-confidence. That, after all, is the problem. That there is no tangible evidence of our lack of attention, since we are aware only of the unexpected objects we notice, not for the ones we missed.

The invisible gorilla

An experiment conducted at Harvard University illustrates perhaps more dramatically than any other, the powerful and profound effect of the illusion of attention. Our experience of our visual world is much smaller than we think. If individuals were aware of the limits of their attention, the illusion would disappear. The individual experiences some aspects of his world, especially those in the center of his attention, but this wealth of experience inevitably leads to the

mistaken belief that he is processing all the detailed information of those around him. In fact, this person knows how clearly he sees certain aspects of his world, but he is not aware of those aspects of his world that are outside the specific focus of his attention each time. His visual experiences hide an astonishing mental blindness, that is, he thinks that objects that have a special appearance or that are unusual will attract his attention, but in reality very often go completely unnoticed. After all, our reserves of attention are known to be limited, so devoting some of one's attention to unexpected events means less available attention to unexpected events (Chabris & Simons, 2011, pp. 25-27).

With the students acting, a short film was shot with two groups of people moving around the space exchanging passes with each other with basketballs. One group wore white and the other black. They then asked volunteers to count how many passes the players exchanged with the whites and at the same time to ignore the passes exchanged by the players with the black ones. The video did not last more than a minute.

As soon as the video was over, the students asked the volunteers to tell them how many passes they counted. The measurement was intended to keep the subjects of the experiment busy with something that required their attention to the action unfolding on the screen. Somewhere in the middle of the video, a student in a gorilla disguise entered the stage, stopped in the center, among the players, turned to the camera and left, staying in the shot for a total of about nine seconds. After asking the volunteers about the number of passes they counted, questions followed as to whether the volunteers noticed anything unusual while counting the passes or whether they noticed someone other than the players.

The striking thing about this experiment is that half of the volunteers who took part in the experiment did not notice the gorilla. Thus, the question arose as to what made the gorilla invisible. How is it possible that so many people do not see a gorilla coming slowly and leaving. According to Chabris and Simons (2011), this misperception arises from the lack of attention to an unexpected object, so its scientific name is "perceptual blindness". The explanation for this error, as they later argued, is due to the fact that when a person focuses on a specific area or a specific aspect of the visual world, he tends to ignore unexpected objects, even if they are obvious and they are presented exactly where he is looking.

Kahneman (2013) argues that the "study of the gorilla" highlights two important elements for the mind. That we may be blind to the obvious, but we are also blind to our blindness.

➤ Addressing perceptual blindness

Returning to the experiment with the invisible gorilla, Chabris & Simons (2011) insist that in order for the volunteers to notice the gorilla, they must first eliminate the perceptual blindness, which is not easy at all since to do so they should be able to effectively eliminate focused attention. In this case, the volunteers should not be counting passes and generally should not be concentrating on something that would interest them. Therefore, they should watch the video without expectations and goals.

Summarizing, Chabris & Simons (2011), emphasize that "perceptual blindness is not a problem. In fact it is a consequence of the way attention works, it is the cost to our ability to focus our minds to avoid distraction and use our limited resources more efficiently" (p.78).

1.1.3 The illusion of confidence

Another illusion that a person encounters in his daily life is the illusion of confidence. This kind of illusion has two distinct but related aspects. The first is that it makes the person overestimate his potential, especially his abilities compared to other people and the second, it makes the person interpret the confidence expressed by other people as a valid sign of their abilities and the accuracy of their memories. However, the truth is, that confidence and ability can be so divergent that the individual is led into a mental trap, with potentially catastrophic consequences (Chabris & Simons, 2011, pp. 152-153).

1.1.4 The illusion of knowledge

The third illusion, mentioned by Chabris & Simons (2011), which we encounter in our daily lives, is the illusion of knowledge, which appears every time a person due to his extensive experience and familiarity with certain objects, thinks that has a deep understanding of how they work (p. 213).

"The boy who keeps asking why"

The following experiment was devised by Leon Rozenblit as part of research for his doctoral dissertation at Yale University. Rozenblit approached students and asked them if they

knew why the sky is blue. If the students answered in the affirmative, he played with them what he called "the boy who keeps asking why". The unexpected result of this experiment was that people gave up really quickly, as they did not answer more than one or two "whys". Even more amazing were their reactions as soon as they realized that they really knew nothing. He states: "It was something against their intuition. They were surprised and bitter and embarrassed ", since they had just claimed that they knew the answer (Chabris & Simons, 2011, p. 214).

Chabris & Simons (2011) argue that people know that there is an answer and feel that they know it, but until they are asked to give it they seem to be unaware of how shallow their knowledge is. They claim that the illusion here is the confusion of the knowledge they have about what is happening, with the understanding of why it is happening, and thus they perceived the feeling of intimacy for authentic knowledge (p. 215).

1.1.5 The illusion of cause

The illusion of cause occurs when two things tend to appear together and people conclude that one must have caused the other. For example, there is a positive correlation between ice cream consumption and drowning rates. Most people drown on days when there is increased ice cream consumption and fewer on days when there is minimal ice cream consumption. Obviously eating ice cream does not cause drowning. There is probably a third factor, the summer heat that probably causes both of these phenomena. Chabris & Simons (2011) argue that the ability to lift the veil of the illusion of cause and see what lies behind it is rarely easy in the real world.

1.1.6 The two Systems of the mind: System 1 and System 2

In recent years, psychologists have ruled that most of our thought processes can be classified into two types. To those who are fast and automatic and to those who are slow and thoughtful. Both of these types of thoughts contribute to everyday illusions.

The two Systems of the mind, namely System 1, which is intuitive and operates automatically and quickly with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control, and System 2, which is slower, wiser and more rational.

Intuitive thinking (System 1), when faced with a problem, such as answering a question or deciding on a move, does the best it can. If the person has relevant expertise with the problem he is facing, he will recognize the situation and the intuitive solution he will think is most likely to be

correct. System 1 constantly makes suggestions to System 2 such as impressions, intuitions, intentions, and feelings. If supported by System 2, impressions and intuitions are transformed into beliefs. When all goes well, as is usually the case, System 2 adopts the recommendations of System 1 with little or no modification. In case System 1 encounters some difficulty, it turns to System 2, which is able to support a more detailed and specific treatment that may solve this problem (Kahneman, 2013, p. 45). Also System 2, has been charged with the constant monitoring of the individual's behavior, that is the control that keeps him polite when angry or on alert when driving at night (p.46).

In general, as mentioned above, System 1 is fast both in the situations that are familiar to it and in its first reactions to challenges. However, it has prejudices, systematic errors that are predisposed to make in specific circumstances since one of the limitations of System 1 is that it cannot be turned off at will. This, in turn, makes intuitive thinking errors difficult to prevent. We have all, for example, felt the conflict between an automatic reaction and the intention to control it. In this case System 2 intervenes, since one of its duty is to overcome the impulses of System 1. In short, System 2 is responsible for self-control.

I. Ego-depletion

Activities that impose high demands on System 2 require self-control and the exercise of self-control is exhausting and unpleasant. Thus Baumeister's (2007) team has repeatedly found that trying to will or self-control is tedious, that is, if a person has to push himself to do something, he will be less willing or less able to exercise self-control as soon as the next challenge arises. This phenomenon is called "ego-depletion". Many studies have shown that when one is in a state of mental exhaustion it will bring negative results in performance. Mental exhaustion has been found to affect various areas such as selective attention (Schmeichel & Baumeister, 2010), decision making (Furley, Bertrams, Englert, & Delphia, 2013) and distraction (Englert, Bertrams, Furley, & Oudejans, 2015).

II. The lazy System 2 and the cognitive delusions

According to Kahneman (2013), System 2 cannot always intervene in the biases of System 1 as it may have no indication of error or even if there are hints of possible errors, they are released only with increased monitoring by System 2.

One of the main functions of System 2 as mentioned above is to monitor and control the thoughts and actions "proposed" by System 1, allowing some to express themselves directly in behavior, while others are suppressed or modified. An example cited by Kahneman (2013) is the problem with the bat and the ball whose characteristic feature is that it is likely to provoke in the person an intuitive, attractive and wrong answer. The problem was: "a bat and ball cost \$1.10. The bat costs one dollar more than the ball. How much does the ball cost?" Most claim that the answer to this simple problem is number 10, when in fact the correct answer is 5 cents. Even those who came to the right number thought of the intuitive answer, but somehow, resisted intuition (p. 76).

Hasty conclusions can be effective if they are likely to be correct, if the cost of an occasional mistake is acceptable, and if rush saves time and effort. But they can be dangerous if the situation is unfamiliar and there is no time to gather more information. Under these conditions there is the possibility of intuitive errors, which can be avoided with a deliberate intervention of System 2 (Kahneman, 2013, p.131).

Shane Frederick and Daniel Kahneman (2013) used the bat-ball problem to study the question of how closely System 2 monitors the proposals / recommendations of System 1. Their reasoning was that they knew something very important for anyone who answered that the ball costs 10 cents. This person did not actively check the correctness of his answer, and System 2 supported an intuitive answer which, with a little effort, could have rejected (Kahneman, 2013, p.77). The ease with which they are so satisfied that they stop thinking is rather worrying. The characterization "lazy", argues Kahneman (2013), constitutes a harsh judgment on the self-control of individuals and System 2, but not unjust.

III. Ideomotor phenomenon

Another unconscious bias mentioned by Kahneman (2013) is the phenomenon of preparation. This phenomenon explains that a person's actions and feelings can be prepared by events they do not even know. Psychologist John Bargh and colleagues (1996) asked New York University students (most aged 18 to 22) to compose four-word phrases from various five-word sets. In one group of students, half of the suggested phrases contained words about elderly people, such as Florida, abstract, bald, gray, or wrinkled. When they completed the test, the young participants moved to another experiment, to an office on the other side of the aisle. In reality, though, the

distance the students made until they reached the other room was the whole experiment. As Bargh had predicted, young people who composed phrases based on words about the elderly walked much slower than the rest.

The "Florida phenomenon" involves two stages of preparation. First, the set of words prepares thoughts for adulthood, although the word elderly is not mentioned. Second, these thoughts prepare a behavior, such as slow walking, associated with adulthood. All this happens without any awareness. The students therefore, although they did not have a conscious perception of the idea of "older", their actions nevertheless changed.

IV. Cognitive ease

Cognitive ease is the measure of how easy it is for our brains to process information. When there are no threats or important news, there is no need to divert attention or make an effort. On the contrary, when there is a problem and increased mobilization of System 2 is required, in this case there is strain. According to Kahneman (2013), when a person is in a state of cognitive convenience, he is probably in a good mood, likes what he sees, trusts his intuitions and has the feeling that the current state is familiar to him. In a state of strain, he is more likely to be cautious and suspicious, to put more effort into what he does, to feel less comfortable and less likely to make mistakes but at the same time be less intuitive and creative than usual.

Mood strongly influences intuitive performance. Experimenters found that when participants in their experiment were in a good mood, the accuracy of performing an intuitive task more than doubled. An even more striking result is that the participants who felt sad, completely failed in their accurate intuitive prediction, their conjectures were no better than random. Thus, Kahneman points out that mood affects the functioning of System 1 since when people feel anxious and sad, they lose touch with their intuition. On the contrary, the happy mood relaxes the control of System 2 in performance. When people are in a good mood they become more intuitive and creative, but also less attentive and more prone to logic errors. A good mood is a sign that in general everything is going well, the environment is safe and we cannot be constantly on the alert. A bad mood indicates that not everything is okay, there is a potential threat and vigilance is needed.

V. Theory of faith and disbelief

Daniel Gilbert et al. (1990), suggested that understanding a statement should begin with an attempt by individuals to believe it. They argue that only then can they decide whether to be skeptical of the statement. The initial attempt to believe it is an automatic operation of System 1. While, as they claim, distrust is a function of System 2.

To confirm this they did an experiment. Participants saw absurd allegations, which after a few seconds were followed by a single word, "true" or "false." Later, mnemonic tests were performed as to which sentences were labeled "true". At some point in the experiment, subjects had to retain digits in their memory during the experiment. This caused a disturbance in system 2. As a result, participants became "distrustful" of the wrong sentences, so the exhausted participants came to believe that many of the wrong sentences were true.

The conclusion from Gilbert's experiment is that when System 2 is "busy", people will believe almost anything. System 2 doubts and disbelieves, but sometimes has many occupations and is often distinguished by laziness. There is evidence to suggest that people, when they are tired and exhausted, are more likely to be influenced by persuasive messages such as advertisements (Kahneman, 2013, p. 134).

VI. Prejudices regarding the judgments and choices of individuals

According to Kahneman (2013), the combination of System 1 with the lazy System 2 implies that the latter will support many of the intuitive beliefs produced by System 1. Of course, System 2 also has the ability to approach the indications more systematically and more carefully, so System 2 follows a series of steps that must be taken before making a decision. However, System 1 is expected to influence even the most cautious decisions.

According to Kahneman (2013) and Hantzi (2012), some of the prejudices that affect people in terms of their judgements and choices are:

1. Halo effect

The tendency to like (or dislike) everything in a person, even those we have not noticed. It is one of the ways in which the representation of the world by System 1 becomes simpler and more coherent than reality (Kahneman, 2013, p.135). For instance, if we like a person may be we will perceive his/her physical appearance more attractive than if we do not like that person. But is not

limited to the physical appearance of a person since according to Cherry (2016), our overall impression of a person influences how we feel and think about his or her character as well.

2. Framing effect

Different ways of presenting the same information often induce different emotions, that is, judgments and decisions are influenced by the way in which the initial questions are framed. People have the tendency to decide on options based on whether the options are presented as a loss or as a gain. Tversky & Kahneman (1981), argue that people often do not recognize that alternatives are similar, but instead are distracted by superficial features of how alternatives are presented, that is, by the framing of the decision.

Research has shown that people are more cautious when alternatives are presented in a positive frame and more risky when presented in a negative frame (Hantzi, 2012, p.80).

3. Heuristic methods

Samartzi (2011), supports that the heuristics that people use, usually include information about their social identity and experience that comes from social attribution (the process of inferring the causes of events or behaviors) and stereotypes. Therefore, the flexibility of human thought in handling and solving a problem is expressed as the ability to take into account, in addition to the elements of the problem itself and elements related to other individual and social parameters (Samartzi, 2011, p. 28).

The questions a person is asked to answer, are addressed to System 2, which will direct attention and seek answers in memory. System 1 works differently. It constantly monitors what is happening inside and outside the mind and continuously produces assessments for the various aspects of situations, without any specific purpose, with little or no effort. These basic estimations play an important role in intuitive judgments because they can easily be replaced by more difficult questions. Kahneman (2013), supports that this is the central idea of the heuristic approach and bias approach.

The heuristic method is a simple process that helps to find adequate, though often incomplete, answers to difficult questions. According to Hantzi (2012), "if individuals acted completely

rationally, they would have to make judgments and make decisions having weighed all the pros and cons. However, due to the abundance of information and the time that the person would need to process them, it would be futile to believe that we operate in this way "(p.72).

In some cases System 2 supports some heuristic response. Of course, System 2 has the opportunity to reject the intuitive answer or modify it by integrate other information. However, the lazy System 2 often follows the path of minimal effort and supports the heuristic response, without a thorough search (Kahneman, 2013, p. 163).

1. The representativeness heuristic

The representativeness heuristic involves making judgments by comparing things to concepts we already have in mind. While this heuristic can speed up the decision-making process, it can also lead to poor choices and stereotypes.

Tversky & Kahneman (1974), wanted to explain this method using the example below:

"Stefanos is very shy and timid, usually willing to help, but with little interest in people or the real world. Meek and neat, he is organized and has a passion for detail". If we ask a person if Stefanos is a farmer, acrobat, librarian or surgeon, the heuristic of representativeness would give him a quick solution, that is, he would assess whether Stefanos is a typical or representative member of each professional category and would conclude that Stefanos will probably be a librarian.

2. The availability heuristic

This heuristic method is used to estimate the frequency of an event based on how quickly relevant cases or correlations (associations) come to a person's mind. When such cases (or correlations) are immediately available, we tend to overestimate the frequency of the event (Hantzi, 2012, p.74).

For example, if a person is asked about the frequency of divorces in Greece, depending on how many cases will come to mind from those around him, he will tend to overestimate or underestimate the frequency of divorces.

But beyond the frequency factor, there are many factors that make it easy to remember events and each one individually is a potential source of bias. For example, a prominent event that attracts attention will be more easily retrieved from memory, such as the divorces of Hollywood celebrities

which attract more attention and come to mind with ease, so there is a possibility that people will exaggerate about the frequency of divorces in Hollywood. Also, another factor is the dramatic events and personal experiences which are more available in relation to incidents that happened to others (Kahneman, 2013, p. 209).

3. The simulation heuristic

According to Kahneman and Tversky (1974), to solve some problems, the person makes hypothetical scenarios to estimate what will happen. That is, he imagines the events in chronological sequence to assess the consequences.

Hantzi (2012) argues that the simulation heuristic is used mainly for prediction but is used more for situations that did not occur marginally (p. 76).

4. The anchoring and adjustment heuristic

When a person makes judgments under conditions of uncertainty, he tries to reduce the doubt by starting with a reference point and adapting it to reach a conclusion. Its immediate social environment are used as a basis on which to judge the social behavior of others (Hantzi, 2012, p. 79).

VII. The Anchoring Effect

The anchoring effect, according to Kahneman (2013), occurs when we have in mind a specific value for an unknown quantity, before we even estimate the quantity. That is, what experimental psychology argues is that estimates are not far from the number we had in mind.

Of great interest is the power of random anchors. An experiment that proves this is the experiment with German judges. German judges read the description of a woman arrested for shoplifting and then rolled two dice, which worked in such a way as to result in either three or nine. The judges were then asked if the punishment, they would impose on the woman was in months, greater or less than the number shown on the dice. On average, those who brought nine reported that they judge her to eight months in prison, while those who brought three, they judge her to five months (Kahneman, 2013, p. 201).

According to Kahneman (2013), the effects of anchoring are due to two mechanisms, one in each system. There is a form of anchoring that occurs as a deliberate adjustment process, a

function of System 2. The second form of anchorage occurs due to the phenomenon of preparation, an automatic manifestation of System 1 (p.193).

People adapt less (i.e. stay close to the anchor) when their mental resources are depleted, either due to memory overload or light intoxication. Insufficient adaptation is a failure of the weak and lazy System 2.

What Kahneman wanted to prove with this experiment is that our thoughts and behavior are influenced much more than we know or desire, by the environment we are in, at a given moment. In conclusion, he argues that System 2 works with data retrieved from memory through the automatic and involuntary operation of System 1. Therefore, System 2 is prone to the influence of anchors, has no control over this phenomenon and is not even aware of it (Kahneman, 2013, pp. 204-205).

VIII. When our expectations are wrong

An interesting experiment that presents the wrong expectations of individuals in a particular case was carried out by the social psychologist Richard Nisbett and his student Eugene Borgida (1975). Participants were led to solitary room and asked to talk to the intercom about their personal lives and problems. They had to speak in turn and there was only one open microphone at a time. Each group consisted of six participants, one of whom had intentionally joined the group. This person began to describe the problems he faced with his adjustment to New York and stated with obvious embarrassment that he often had panic attack, especially under stress. Then came the turn of the other participants. When the circle closed and the person started again to speak into the microphone, he pretended to be upset and incoherent, saying that he felt he was having a panic attack and asking for help. At that moment, the microphone of the next member of the group was automatically activated and nothing could be heard other from the person who seemed to be dying.

The impressive result of the experiment was the action of the participants. While they knew that one of them had a panic attack and was asking for help, many thought that there were many others who could respond, so it would be better for them to stay in their seats. The result was that only four of the fifteen participants responded immediately to the call for help, while six did not leave their rooms at all and the remaining five left the room much later.

The experiment therefore, as Kahneman (2013) argues, shows that “individuals feel relieved when they know that there are others who have heard the same cry for help” (p. 272), while he goes on to say that most of us consider ourselves decent people who would rush to help in such a situation, and we expect that the rest of our decent fellow citizens would act in the same way. Thus, this experiment was intended to show that this expectation is wrong.

IX. The intuitive predictions

In life there are many opportunities for prediction. Some predictions are based on intuition and System 1 in two basic ways. Some intuitions in skill and expertise acquired through repetitive experiences, while some other intuitions arise from the operation of heuristic methods. Correcting intuitive predictions is a task of System 2, which requires a lot of effort and therefore this effort is justified only when there is a strong desire to avoid mistakes. But it is important to know that correcting intuitions can make our lives difficult. Following our intuitions is more natural and in some ways more enjoyable than acting against it (Kahneman, 2013, pp. 294-295, 305, 308).

Thus, two lessons that Kahneman (2013) mentions about predictions are that "on the one hand we cannot avoid the errors of predictions, because the world is unpredictable and on the other hand we cannot trust high subjective confidence as an indicator of accuracy" (p. 347).

1.2 Unconscious Bias in the workplace

As I said above, it is a common feature of a person's daily thoughts, to resort to errors / prejudices / biases, it is something that the person cannot easily recognize as a mistake and does not realize that it is something that needs to change. The person often "falls victim" to his distorted thinking, but does not seem to be able to escape from such mistakes. Unconscious bias is part of our daily lives, so of course, it could not be absent in the workplace.

Unconscious bias and gender stereotyping are a danger to an organization as they can affect diversity, recruiting, who gets hired, promoted and retention efforts as well. In addition, they can omit talent and deform performance reviews and without a doubt, they have the power to shape an organization's culture. It is vital, according to McCormick (2015), all the HR professionals to ask the question "To what extent are our organizational culture and business results being affected by unconscious bias?"

To begin with, some general examples of unconscious bias that have been presented by the Queensland University and which cannot be explained by common sense, show us how these biases affect decision-making in the workplace. This study has found that "blond women's salaries were seven percent higher than women who were brunettes or redheads and also the National Bureau of Economic Research found that for every 1 percent increase in a woman's body mass, there was a six percent decrease in family income. A Duke University study found that "mature-faced" people had a career advantage over "baby-faced" people. In addition a Yale University study found that male and female scientists, trained to reject the subjective, were more likely to hire men, rank them higher in competency than women, and pay them \$4,000 more per year than women" (Wilkie, 2015).

Therefore, we understand that such biases can be catastrophic for both organizations and their employees. The difficulty with unconscious bias lies in the fact that can be difficult to overcome. Thus, for this reason, HR professionals and organizations should implement strategies that will reduce the effects of unconscious biases, such as to create policies and standards that both employees and organizations need to follow. But first, it is good to present some of the

unconscious bias that exist in the workplace and how they affect both organizations and employees.

1.2.1 Unconscious bias in recruitment and selection process – Gender bias, Affinity bias, Halo effect

Although the last forty years, according to Equality Act (2010), there has been anti-discrimination legislation stating that “it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a candidate for a job because of his age, disability, race, belief, sexual orientation or gender in any part of the recruitment process”, however, this legislation, although it has raised awareness, is not enough to help prevent discrimination, exclusion and inequality.

Starting from the recruitment process, a serious unconscious bias is observed in the early stages of this process, that is, the interview process which may be influenced by unconscious bias at various stages and in different ways, when conducted without the presence of data based on valid predictors of job performance, such as ability test scores, which helped to focus attention only on information related to the job role (Whysall, 2017). The first stages, which is the pre-interview stage, where information from the candidates' CVs, irrelevant to the requirements of the job, can prejudges all subsequent processing. In addition, as is already known, only a few seconds are enough to form the first impressions for the candidates during the interviews. Therefore, this processing relies on existing heuristics, and that means is potentially open to implicit biases.

Another unconscious bias observed, is during the preparation of the job description, which is used to find the right candidate who best fits the vacancy. The bias in this case, undermines the position of women, as a result, men are more likely to be hired in these job positions. For this reason it is called Unconscious Gender Bias. More specifically, certain words are associated with common gender stereotypes. A research conducted in 2005 in the United States found an association between women and adjectives such as ‘emotional’, ‘mild’, ‘pleasant’, ‘sensitive’, ‘warm’, ‘affectionate’ and ‘friendly’, and between men and adjectives such as ‘dominant’, ‘achievement-oriented’, ‘ambitious’, ‘self-confident’, ‘rational’, ‘tough’ and ‘aggressive’. That means if job descriptions for job positions in an organization are described with words are associated with the male gender, then males will be more encouraged to send their CV for these position as opposed to women, and beyond that, men will be considered as the ideal choice to fill these positions, resulting in the unconscious bias would work against women.

Now, about the selection process, one of the most popular unconscious bias observed, is the “hire like me” bias and it is also called Affinity bias (Emerson, 2017). People have the tendency when a new person is added to the team, they want to ensure that this person is the right one and they will like him. The more similar this new person is to the team, the more positively they will evaluate him. According to Bagues and Perez-Villadoniga (2012), raters prefer candidates who share similarities with themselves in respect to several different dimensions, including values, habits and beliefs. It is also important to mention the fact that raters have the tendency to notice and remember more detailed information about interview candidates similar to themselves, while on the other hand, they notice and remember less information about candidates they see as different to themselves and most importantly they retain the information which confirms their existing stereotype about them (Bartlett 2009). Therefore, as can be seen from what has been written above, unconscious bias will always affect the decision-making process and as Wilkie (2014), points out, this will happen even when people are trained in diversity policies.

In order to understand the Affinity bias, psychologists use three different theoretical backgrounds. Byrne (1971), based on learning theory, presented a model in which similarity is perceived as being rewarding and dissimilarity works as a negative reinforcement. The second theory is the self-categorization theory, in which a person’s self-concept is based on the social categories he places himself in, in order to create a positive self-identity (Jackson et al., 1991; Turner, 1987). This has as a result to have a preference for people that are similar to the social category on which he bases his identity. Finally, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), argues that people want to belong to a group as this leads to the positive feeling of social identity.

Another bias observed during the selection process is the Halo effect. The halo effect is “a type of cognitive bias in which our overall impression of a person influences how we feel and think about his or her character. Essentially, our overall impression of a person impacts our evaluations of that person's specific traits” (Cherry, 2016). This bias is also known as the physical attractiveness stereotype and the “what is beautiful is good” principle (Shahani-Denning, 2003). It is interesting what Standing (2004) had mentioned, that is, attractive individuals rated highly more favorably for their personality traits or characteristics than those who are less attractive. It is fact that job applicants, probably will feel the impact of this bias, since whether his/her prospective employer views the applicant as attractive, they are more likely to also believe that they are intelligent and qualified. Mahoney (1978), explains that this is happen because physical

appearance is the most easily accessible information you have about a person, therefore, people tend to judge this person with the information available.

Thus, unconscious bias, which can be observed in the recruitment and selection process are bias towards names, areas of the city a candidate lives in, education levels, physical appearance etc. (Noon, 2018). The interviewers may be unaware of their prejudice or bias against candidates. A study conducted by researchers at MIT and the University of Chicago has showed that among 5,000 resumes which were sent to 1,250 employers, candidates who are mentioned by names considered to be “typically white,” received fifty percent more callbacks than candidates with “typically black” names. White candidates also received more callbacks than highly skilled black candidates (Ross, 2008).

But this discrimination also applies to gender. According to Goldberg (1968) and Rosen & Jerdee (1974), women face personal discrimination when going through the selection process. For instance, when a job is considered as a male-typed job, female candidates are evaluated more negatively and recommended for employment less often by study participants, compared with matched male candidates (e.g., Hunter et al., 1982; Tosi and Einbender, 1985; Olian et al., 1988; Davison and Burke, 2000).

A similar experiment to that conducted by MIT and the University of Chicago on candidates' resumes who are mentioned by names considered to be "typically white" and "typically black", shows that when participants were asked to rate the competency and effectiveness of a candidate, presented alternately as either Howard or Heidi and all other details remained the same, participants decided to rate “Howard” as highly competent and effective and stated that they were more willing to hire him or work with him. However, when the candidate presented as “Heidi”, with the same information, participants rated her differently.

1.2.2 Unconscious Bias in Performance Appraisal System- Contrast bias, Halo effect, Confirmation bias

Without a doubt, it is extremely important that people at work should receive performance appraisals. This procedure is beneficial for both the individual and the organization, since it helps them to set goals and improve their performance. However, quite often we observe that both sides are sometimes dissatisfied with the outcome. Lathman & Mann (2006), argue that this is because

people seem to find it difficult to provide an appraisal that accurately reflects a person's performance. This inaccuracy seems to be due to contrast bias and the Halo effect.

“A judgement about the performance of others, appears to be the evaluation received about one's own performance. This means that when people have to make formal judgements about the performance of others, those judgements are influenced by the formal performance judgements that others have previously made about them” (Latham et al., 2008). This is because performance appraisals typically involve estimates of value under uncertainty. Therefore, people use anchors and adjustment heuristics, in order to have a guidepost that will help them to evaluate (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Furthermore, according to DeNisi and Peters (1996), another difficulty in the evaluation process is the inability of individuals to recall performance data at the time of an evaluation.

In addition to the effect of anchoring, it is also interesting what Brief and Weiss (2002) argue, that is, the performance evaluation can be affected by mood. Evidence suggests that raters are too generous when in a good mood and not generous enough when in a bad one (Sinclair, 1988).

Now, about the contrast bias, Murphy et al. (1985), support that when rating multiple targets, appraisers often compare the performance of the individual rated second to the performance of the individual rated first. Studies conducted by Loveland and Palmer (2001) and Maurer et al., (1993), show that when participants viewed and rated two good or two poor lecturers and then viewed and rated an average lecturer, the average lecturer received good ratings in the poor performance context and poor ratings in the good performance context.

As I said above, it is easier for someone to remember information about a person, when this information is based on the general impression one makes about that person. This tendency of individuals, as expected, also affects the evaluation process of an employee. In other words, according to Feldman and Lynch (1988), the general impression is sufficiently diagnostic for almost all specific traits (Halo effect). Therefore, a rater need only recall whether an employee is good or bad to make ratings on a variety of different performance dimensions.

Another bias that has a huge impact on performance appraisal is the Confirmation bias, which is the tendency for people to seek information that confirms preexisting beliefs or

assumptions (McCormick, 2015). People tend to ignore information that does not fit with their beliefs. Managers can often make decisions that fit with their beliefs about employees, and ignore important information or behavior that they just don't want to see. This is one of the most dangerous biases. When we make an opinion about others, we subconsciously look for evidences to support our opinions. We do this because we want assurance for our opinion. (Oberai & Anand, 2018).

Managers have the tendency to judge employees as either good or bad and then they try to find evidence in order to support their opinion. Therefore, opinions are formed early in the process and then, the obtained information evaluated in a way which confirms their opinion (Müller, 2010).

1.2.3 Promotions- Unconscious Gender Bias and “similar to me bias”

Whysall (2017), argued that promotion decisions tend to be highly subjective. Ruderman and Ohlott (1994), mentioned that “in a review of 64 promotions in three Fortune 500 companies, it was noted that formally collected data didn't enter into the promotion decision (p. 14), but promotion decisions were based on an intuitive, subjective process that concentrated on their personal knowledge of the candidate and opinions of others” (p. 14). When decision-makers are face ambitious criteria, they tend to rely upon perceived similarity to themselves, something that happens more often for promotions involving male employees than females (Ruderman et al. 1995).

Research has shown that the “similar to me bias” or “in-group bias” can influence promotion decisions. Individuals tend to attribute the success of those similar to themselves to internal characteristics, while on the contrary, when an “out-group” individual, achieves something, they will attribute this achievement to external and less stable characteristics (Hewstone 1990).

With regard to discrimination against women, they experience great discrimination in their workplace in terms of their promotion. As Bohnet (2016), argued that more men receive promotion than women and most importantly, women who are mothers are recommended for promotion less than women who are not mothers, something that does not apply to men since whether they have children or not, it is something that does not affect the decision in terms of their promotion.

Without a doubt, women are under-represented in positions of power. The organizational policies and practices as well as in institutional characteristics (laws, childcare infrastructure, culture, etc.) contribute to this. Organizational policies and practices have been affected by unconscious gender bias leading to discrimination. Women have to deal with many barriers if they want to promote into corporate leadership positions and undoubtedly, unconscious gender bias remains a significant barrier to women's career advancement. According to a global report conducted by the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), five of the barriers to women's leadership were related to discrimination and unconscious gender bias. The second most-cited barrier was the social roles of men and women and the general perception that management is a man's job and the third most-cited barrier was the masculine corporate culture.

Eagly and Mladinic (1994), argue that even if a woman succeeds and is promoted to the position of power of an organization, the fact that women are stereotyped to be the nicer of the two sexes, this automatically provokes a reaction due to the fact that the leader's behavior is inconsistent with the role of the female sex. In addition, the fact that the organizations have in mind that these positions in order to be effective, require characteristics such as a forceful behavior and directness instead of niceness, behaviors that automatically refer to the male sex, can act against women. In general, the attributes we attach to women, including inclusiveness, warmth, and niceness, tend to be inconsistent with the characteristics that are needed for success in the workplace (Schein, 2001). Alternatively, masculine traits such as independence and dominance are positively evaluated in these environments (Aries, 1996).

Furthermore, it is extremely important, both sexes to hold positions of power in an organization, because according to Konrad et al. (2010), women who work with a male supervisor perceive less organizational support compared with those who work with a female supervisor. Therefore, this means not necessarily always but perhaps in several cases, that women who work with a male supervisor are facing much more often gender discrimination compared with their counterparts that are supervised by women. According to Tsui and O'Reilly (1989), this happen due to bias that called "similar to me bias", where leaders reward and promote individuals like themselves, something that is definitely against women since as I mentioned before, the positions of power in a company belong most of the time to men.

Thus, even though women have the qualifications needed to be promoted to positions of power, because of the discrimination they suffer, we observe the low percentage of women being

promoted. Women are judged based on the average characteristics of a group rather than on their individual ones. This prejudice comes from a mixed perception of workplace gender roles, and the employers' expectations of gender role stereotyping (Eagly, 2004).

1.3 Unconscious Bias and their impact on employees

As I have already mentioned, stereotyping is a form of social categorization in which pre-existing beliefs are uncritically associated with social categories (Hilton & Hoppel, 1996). Stereotypes, can influence how people see others and make assumptions about others based on their beliefs concerning the traits they have of an individual, which have been associated with a particular social category to which the target individual belongs.

Many research on unconscious bias and employment discrimination have shown that conscious discrimination holds only a small part in terms of discrimination in the workplace, since most discrimination results from unconscious stereotyping and cultural biases that never enter into the decision maker's conscious mind (Pollard, 1999). Dovidio and Gaertner (1986), argued that people are unable to define the reason for their unconscious bias decisions, they are completely unaware of their own motivation but they will try to state reasons in agreement with their actions. This theory is called "Aversive racism" and explains the phenomenon in which "people create unprejudiced, rational reasons for their actions because they are unwilling to believe their actions were motivated by prejudice" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986).

1.3.1 Negative Stereotypes and their endorsement

As expected, people who belong to social groups that are associated with certain stereotypes, have to face some negative consequences that affect these people. As Merton (1948) argues, negative stereotypes not only affect the evaluation of others, but they also affect self-evaluations. This is because when individuals realize that they are the target of a negative stereotype, their performance is affected through behavioral confirmation processes such as self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1948) and stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). As I have already mentioned, adopting negative stereotypes can contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, the individual may adopt such behavior where he validates the negative assumptions of others (Merton, 1948). For instance, it has been show that women believe that men have stronger math skills than them. The stronger this endorsement, the lower the self-identification women have with math and the poorer their standardized math scores (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002).

It is interesting to note that the stereotypical thinking of a person increases as his level of social power also increases (Fiske & Depret, 1996).

Social psychologists believe that stereotyping is a manifestation of “in-group and out-group” (Pollard, 1999). According to Pollard (1999), the “in-group and out-group” bias is the tendency to see members of our own group as individuals, while members who belong to the out-group are an undifferentiated, stereotyped mass. It is not surprise that stereotypes held against out-group members, resulting in inaccurate appraisals. It takes slightly longer (in terms of milliseconds) for an unconsciously biased person to associate positive word with a member who belongs to the out-group (Greenwald et al., 1998). Stigmatizing out-group individuals’ behavior can be harmful, especially when the stereotypes are used to the negatively evaluate these individuals, ignoring information about the individuals in favor of stereotype-based assumptions. As Steele and Aronson (1995) emphasize, the impressive thing is that stereotypes, affect not only the behavior of those that discriminate, but the behavior of those discriminated against.

1.3.2 Negative Stigmatization, Group Membership, and Self-Esteem

Katz, Joiner, and Kwon (2002) examined how stereotype internalization leads to emotional distress and how the personal and collective self-esteem is affected. First of all, according to Katz et al. (2002), “personal self-esteem is a person’s feeling of self-worth as an individual, whereas collective self-esteem is the value placed by an individual on their own social group”. They suggested that stereotypes internalization, increases emotional distress of the members of the stigmatized group in three ways. First, negative stereotypes can directly impact collective self-esteem of the devalued group. Second, independent of personal self-esteem, negative stereotypes can cause individuals to feel devalued due to group membership. Third, individuals may develop negative attitudes and behaviors associated by stereotypes with group membership.

Against to self-fulfilling prophecy, Swann (1983), supported that when the individuals confronted with negative stereotypes, they use self-verification. For instance, if people expect a woman to be calm, but in reality she is aggressive, then she will behave even more aggressively when faced with the calm stereotype and this process can occur unconsciously. Madon et al. (2001), found that both self-verification and self-fulfilling prophecy were present in real world situations and both stereotype-based processes can lead to underperformance.

1.3.3 In-group versus out-group comparisons

Blanton, Crocker, and Miller (2000) examined in-group versus out-group comparisons when faced with a negative stereotype and the effects of these comparisons on self-esteem. They found that when there was an upward in-group comparison (when individuals compare their performance to those doing better), the personal self-esteem increased, as well, when someone from an out-group was seen as doing worse on a task, again, the self-esteem also increased and that is called downward out-group comparison (Lockwood, 2002). Therefore, upward in-group comparisons and downward out-group comparisons lead to higher personal self-esteem and of course, is observed that self-esteem decreases when there was an upward out-group and downward in-group comparisons.

Nevertheless, following these findings, Martinot, Redersdorff, Guimond, and Dif (2002), argued that the previous findings are limited only to group members with average or low self-esteem, after they found out that people with high self-esteem are not affected by upward comparisons with out-group members. In contrast, these people suffered a self-esteem loss from upward comparisons with others of their in-group.

1.3.4 Gender Bias- “think-manager-think-male” bias

As Baker and Cobb (1997) mentioned, bias against women is related to the social roles women occupied. Discrimination against women is strongly observed in cases where women seem to "adopt" roles that require “masculine” traits (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

A widespread bias in Europe, according to Schein and Mueller (1992) is the “men as leaders bias” or is also known as “think-manager-think-male” bias (Duehr & Bono, 2006). This bias states that “masculine traits” are more suited to the traits associated with positions of power in an organization than the traits attributed to women (Jackson & Engstrom, 2007). For instance, when women are associated with traits such as "kindness", they are automatically considered less competent of taking on a role within the organization associated with "assertiveness". They also found that although this view has begun to decline, men still supported the think manager-think male bias, but women did not. It is no surprise that women leaders and potential women leaders

rated less favorably than men. Of course, it is important to mention the fact that the same applies to men, who work in a “feminine role”.

All of the above, have as a result employees (women in a masculine role and men in a feminine role) to be hired and promoted less often when a work role is seen as masculine or feminine respectively as well as that performance evaluations are also affected.

1.3.5 Stereotypes and Negotiation

Without a doubt, negotiation is an extremely important skill in obtaining promotion, however it also hides some important unconscious bias. During the negotiation, the anchoring effect is very likely to occur. As I have already mentioned above, the anchoring effect is when a person makes judgments under conditions of uncertainty, he tries to reduce the doubt by starting with a reference point and adapting it to reach a conclusion. This effect can pose a significant risk to the quality of a person’s judgement. For instance, anchoring can affect the initial offers while also significantly affecting the final profit, when both sides using anchors during the negotiation process (Ritov, 1996).

In addition, emotional bias can also influence the negotiation process. According to Bazerman and Moore (2009), emotional bias is a bias that depends on the emotional mood in which an individual is when he has to make a decision. When the individual is in a good mood, he starts to use heuristics which lead him in more biased judgements.

Another unconscious bias that affects the negotiation process or even worse prevent a person from starting such a process, it is the status quo bias, where “leads people to prefer things to stay the same, or that they change as little as possible”, or in addition, to choose to do nothing or maintaining on someone’s current or previous decision without a change (Sherfin, 2008, Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). This bias can be explained, according to Lee and Roberts (2009), due to fear of risks arising from decisions taken, due to the fact that people are not able to see the potential benefits of changes, fear of failing and fearing of hard work after the changes. In addition, the status quo bias can be explained by the fact that people will feel upset if they are faced with a situation where they are forced to make a different choice, which prevents them from even thinking about other potential alternatives (Baron, 2008). Therefore, people tend to stick to the old, even when they would choose the new because they do not like to lose something, a condition called

"loss aversion" (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988 & Baron, 2008) and because of the fear of the future, as future is always considered uncertain (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988).

More specifically, in terms of the workplace, employees tend to resist to change, as people fear of losing their jobs or power and influence when there are introductions of new systems on how work is to be done (Stephen & Wall, 1995). Furthermore, employees in some uncertain circumstances stick to the status quo bias such as the same low paying job, because the process of searching for a better one is slow, uncertain and costly (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988).

In regards to women, for them the negotiation is not easy because is often seen as an agentic behavior and that means, women who use negotiation, violating prescriptive stereotypes of how women should behave. Thus, men have been found to have an advantage in negotiation outcomes. As Nash (1950) argued, there are two dominant styles of negotiation: cooperative and non-cooperative. When men negotiate they use agentic strategies, while women use communal strategies. In addition, men are only cooperative only when there is a low cost associated with cooperative behavior, while women, on the other hand, cooperate even when such behavior had a large cost (Andreoni & Vesterlund, 2001). Another difference between the two genders in negotiation is that men are more strategic while women feel the need to have trust and be trusting in negotiations (Buchan, Croson & Solnick, 2008).

In general, according to Babcock et al. (2006), men tend to set higher goals, are more willing to initiate negotiation, and feel more entitled to negotiation conforming to masculine, agentic stereotypes, while women set lower goals, view negotiation hesitantly are less certain of their worth, and tend to use more tentative speech in negotiations compared to men (Kray & Thompson, 2005).

Of great interest are the findings of Bowles, Babcock and Lai (2007), where as they claim, women who initiated negotiations for a higher salary were viewed as less desirable to work with, less likable, and more demanding compared to the negotiating men.

1.3.6 Association between Unconscious Biases and Workload

The increase in workload is observed more and more nowadays, with the result that employees devote a lot of time from their personal time in order to complete their work obligations. This directly affects the employees, according to Netemeyer et al. (1996), since they are forced to

devote a lot of time to complete a task, and this means that they do not have enough time to do other activities they want such as family responsibilities, leisure or rest and also if employees work longer hours, they will need to expend more effort, resulting in feelings of strain, at risk of increase the likelihood of burnout (Braunstein-Bercovitz, 2013).

Buehler et al. (2002), argued that there is evidence that unconscious biases may increase workload. One of the most robust bias is called the planning fallacy (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), where individuals tend to underestimate the duration that is needed to complete specific tasks. Due to this bias, individuals often take responsibilities they cannot complete within standard work hours and so are forced to either work hurriedly or sacrifice their personal time to complete the tasks.

Another bias that increases the workload is known as IKEA effect. When people overestimate the value of anything they do, they tend to overrate the quality of their work (Norton et al., 2012), which prevents them from assigning tasks to other people when applicable. In addition, some other biases are the “illusion of control” (Langer, 1975), where people inflate their ability to control random events and due to this bias, individuals may feel the need to intervene on a task when no involvement is needed and also may ignore other complications at work such as burnout. Next is “the just world fallacy” (Lerner, 1980), according to which people have the tendency to receive the rewards, recognition, and punishment they deserve. Therefore, individuals assume that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded. Finally, the “spotlight effect” (Gilovich et al., 2000), where individuals tend to overestimate the extent to which their actions are likely to be noticed by other people, thus, due to this effect, individuals believe that if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized.

2. Methodology

2.1 Sample of present research

The sample of the present study consists of 112 subjects of which 44 were men (39.30%), 67 women (59.80%) and a person who preferred not to state his or her gender. Subjects were asked to answer eight questions in an online questionnaire (<https://docs.google.com/forms>). The sample included managers and employees working in either the public or the private sector.

The questionnaire was linguistically understandable. The questions were formulated clearly and in such a way that they could be understood by all participants. Before initiating the procedure, reference was made to the fact that participation in the present research was not mandatory but optional, since each potential participant was instructed not to participate in the research, if for any reason he/she did not wish to do so. Reference was also made to the fact that the data of the questionnaire were used purely for research purposes, the duration of its completion did not exceed 10 minutes and that the answers of the participants were confidential and anonymous.

2.2 Tool- data collection, Measurements

The tool used to collect the research data was a questionnaire which had the following format: Initially, there was the general title of the research conducted "Unconscious bias in the workplace and their impact on employees" as well as questions to fill in the demographics of the participant related to gender, age, whether they work in the public or private sector and finally, whether they work in the organization as managers or employees. On the following pages, multiple-choice questions followed, where the participant had to choose one of the five answers offered. The first questions investigated factors that influence the participant in forming the first impression of his / her colleague or a candidate during interviews and the factors related to the job description, for example " the words used in a job description to find the right candidate who best fits the vacancy, can prevent me from sending my CV or influence the decision on which candidate is the most suitable". This was followed by questions about a new member that will be added to the team of the participant and what will affect the participant in understanding that this new member is the right one. The following questions then examined their judgments about the performance of other

people, their opinion on discrimination against women and finally asked how they react to various changes related to their workplace.

The scale used in the measurements is the Likert scale, which usually consists of five-point agreement scale used to measure respondents' agreement with various statements. The questionnaire asked the subjects to indicate their level of agreement with the questions we asked them by choosing one of the categories that followed each statement such as: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree.

The type of questions used for the questionnaire were closed-ended questions, which require the selection of only one of the alternative answers offered and there is no right or wrong answer as this type of question is used to examine the subjects' attitudes (Stalikas, 2011, σ. 106). Regarding data processing, SPSS was used.

2.3 Issues of investigation

Reviewing the existing literature was the research strategy for data collection. The bibliographic research was the initial preparatory stage of the specific quantitative research, aiming at defining the research direction and the research questions, in formulating research hypotheses.

The purpose of this study is to describe some of the unconscious bias that people encounter in their daily lives and which most of the time can lead them to make a hasty and wrong decision. In addition, to explain how these unconscious bias are used in the workplace and specifically by employees of an organization. Through the questionnaire, the research shows whether the unconscious biases affect subjects' perception and decision-making in their workplace and how these biases can affect their behavior. Finally, it examines whether they are aware of the unconscious bias they commit in their workplace.

Through the literature review, it was possible to formulate some research hypotheses.

As mentioned in the "Unconscious Bias in the workplace" chapter, subjects are affected by the characteristics of the person being observed (in this case either their colleagues or an interviewee). Thus, the first research hypothesis examined the factors that affect the participant in forming the first impression of his / her colleague or candidate during interviews and if their overall impression of this person affects how they feel and think about his or her character.

The second research hypothesis examined concerned the awareness or not of the subjects regarding the factors related to the job description, for example " the words used in a job

description to find the right candidate who best fits the vacancy, can prevent me from sending my CV or influence the decision on which candidate is the most suitable".

A big role in the decision of the participants regarding if a new member that will be added to their team is the right one, is related to similarities this person has with the team. In order to examine this, the questions were "It is important for me to be sure that the new person that will be added to the team is the right one and I will like him/her", "The more similarities this person has with the team (including values, habits and beliefs), the more positively I will evaluate him/her", "I am more likely to notice and remember more detailed information about interview candidates or my colleagues who are similar to me", and "I am more likely to notice and remember less detailed information about candidates/colleagues I consider different from me".

Another unconscious bias checked with the phrases "My judgments about the performance of other people are influenced by the performance judgments that others have previously made about me" and "My judgments about the performance of other people are influenced by my mood", concerns the hasty conclusions about a situation without having enough information.

The next two research hypothesis examined, concerned the gender inequality and discrimination against women in the workplace with the phrases "I believe that more men receive promotion compared to women", "I believe that women who are mothers have the same opportunities for promotion as men or women who are not mothers", "I believe that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization" and "I believe that women have the require characteristics for positions of power, such as a forceful behavior and directness".

The questionnaire then referred to questions on changes in the workplace and how research subjects cope with these changes. Therefore, the subjects were asked if when faced with a change in the workplace they prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible, if they are afraid of change because they are afraid that they might fail, if they resist change as they fear they may lose their job and finally were asked if they would dare to search for another job, if they were not satisfied with their salary.

The last question was about the workload and if participants believed that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work would be rewarded and if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions would be recognized. According to Gilovich et al. (2000), individuals tend to overestimate the extent to which their actions are likely to be noticed by other people.

2.4 Data collection

The electronic questionnaires were ready to accept the answers of the participants during the spring semester of the academic year 2020-2021. Prior to completing it, participants were informed, both about the purpose of the research and that their participation was anonymous and optional. The text is quoted below:

"This questionnaire is part of my thesis, which is conducted at the Department of Human Resource Management of the University of Cyprus. The aim of the research is to study how the way we think affects our behavior when making decisions in our workplace. You will not need more than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The data of the questionnaire are used purely for research purposes and your participation in the research is anonymous and optional ".

The questionnaire was an improvised questionnaire which in its full form is presented in the appendix of this Thesis.

3. Results

The questionnaire was completed by a total of 112 employees, who work in either the private sector or the public sector. Specifically, out of 112 subjects, 44 were men (39.30%), 67 women (59.80%) and a person who preferred not to state his or her gender. The only restriction on completing the questionnaire regarding the sample was that only individuals who were currently working in public or private sector organizations were eligible to participate in the survey.

The purpose is to test the hypotheses mentioned in the methodology chapter regarding the unconscious bias and how they affect employees in making decisions in their workplace.

3.1 Investigation of Unconscious Bias

3.1.1 Forming first impressions

The first question was about the formation of the first impression, where according to the literature, only a few seconds are enough to form the first impression for the colleagues or the candidates during the interviews. Therefore, participants were asked, based on the Likert scale (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree), to rate whether they agree with this statement.

Specifically, 30.40 % of the subjects, which is also the majority (n=34), state that they neither agree nor disagree with this statement, while a particularly significant percentage of 29.50% (n=33) and 28.60% (n=32) show that they disagree and agree with the statement respectively. On the contrary, the majority (58 %, n=65) “agrees” that the overall impression of their colleague or a candidate during the interview affects how they feel and think about his or her character.

Image 1: A few seconds are enough to form the first impression about my colleagues or candidates during interviews

1a. A few seconds are enough to form the first impression about my colleagues or candidates during interviews

112 απαντήσεις

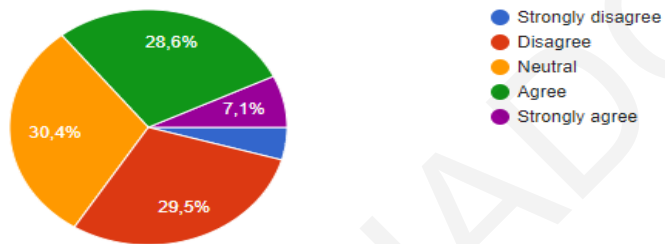
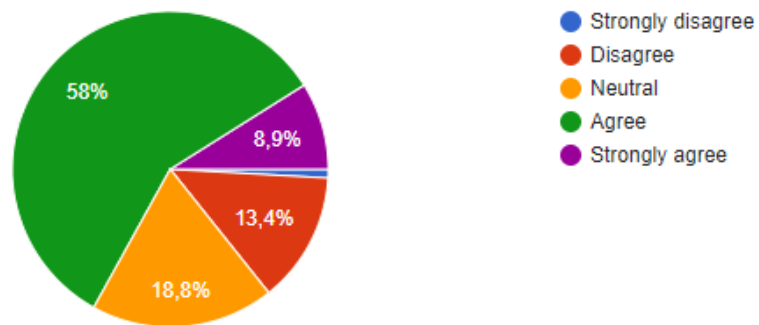


Image 2: My overall impression of a person affects how I feel and think about his or her character

1b. My overall impression of a person affects how I feel and think about his or her character

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3.1.2 The words used in a job description

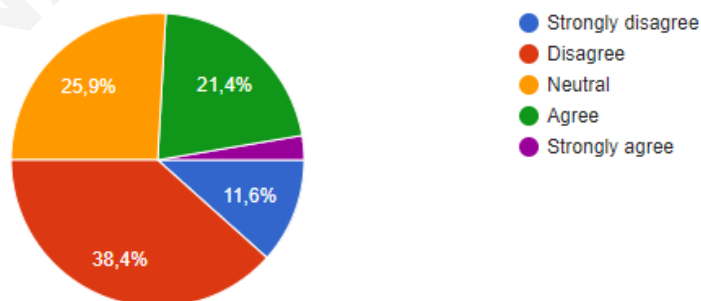
The second question examined whether the words used in a job description to find the candidate who best fits the vacancy, such as "friendly personality" or "achievement-oriented personality", can prevent the participants from sending their CV or influence the decision of the managers on which candidate is the most suitable.

The majority of subjects believe that is not affected by the words used in a job description (38.40%, n=43). The second most popular answer was "neutral", with 25.90% (n=29), while the next answer with a fairly high percentage was "agree" with 21.40% (n=24). On the contrary, they consider with a percentage of 11.60 % (n=13) that the "words used in a job description" do not influence "at all" their decision.

Image 3: The words used in a job description to find the candidate who best fits the vacancy, such as "friendly personality" or "achievement-oriented personality", can prevent me from sending my CV or influence the decision on which candidate is the most suitable

2. The words used in a job description to find the candidate who best fits the vacancy, such as "friendly personality" or "achievement-oriented personality", can prevent me from sending my CV or influence the decision on which candidate is the most suitable

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3.1.3 About the new person to be added to the team

One of the unconscious bias that people face every day and which can lead them to misjudge a person or make a wrong decision, is the “in-group” bias. To test this bias, subjects were asked “how important it is for them to be sure that the new person who will be added to the team is the right one and they will like him/her”.

As shown in Image 4, the majority of subjects consider it significant at 46.40% (n=52), and this statement is reinforced by the next most popular answer, “strongly agree”, with a percentage of 28.6% (n=32). On the contrary, only 8% (n=9) believe that is not important for them to like the new person and only one person (0.9%), completely disagree with this statement.

The answers to the next question were somewhat different, “the more similarities the new person has with the team (including values, habits and beliefs), the more positively I will evaluate him/her”. In particular, they claim that they “agree” with the statement, with a percentage of 38.40% (n=43), but a high percentage also argue that they “disagree” and would not evaluate the new person more positively (26.80%, n=30), while 19.60% (n=22) say they are “neutral” about this situation. Of course, we have to also focus on the answer “strongly agree” with a percentage of 13.4% (n=15).

When subjects are similar to their colleagues or interview candidates (same values, habits and beliefs), they are more likely to notice and remember more detailed information about them (38.40%, n=43). On the contrary, a percentage of 30.40% (n=34), “disagree” with this statement, while 21.40% (n=24) stated “neutral”.

Otherwise, where subjects consider interview candidates or their colleagues different from them, they stated that they are not agree that they are more likely to notice and remember less detailed information about them (39.3%, n=44). Instead, 33.9% (n=38) stated that “neither agree nor disagree” and only 17.9% (n=20) state that they are more likely to notice and remember less detailed information about interview candidates or their colleagues they consider different from them.

Image 4: It is important for me to be sure that the new person that will be added to the team is the right one and I will like him/her

3a. It is important for me to be sure that the new person that will be added to the team is the right one and I will like him/her

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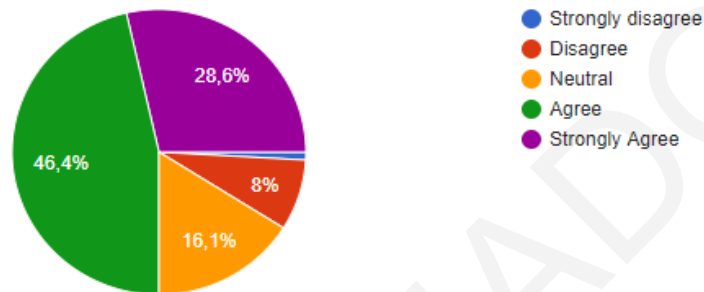


Image 5: The more similarities the new person has with the team (including values, habits and beliefs), the more positively I will evaluate him/her

3b. The more similarities the new person has with the team (including values, habits and beliefs), the more positively I will evaluate him/her

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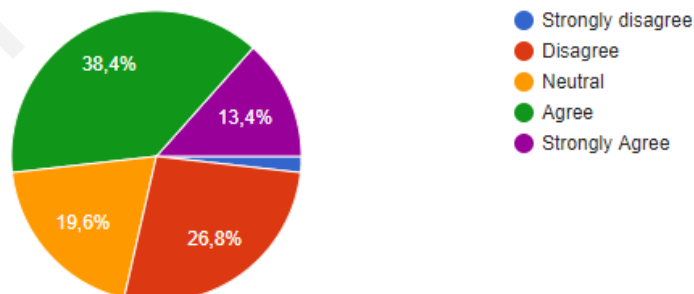


Image 6: I am more likely to notice and remember more detailed information about interview candidates or my colleagues who are similar to me

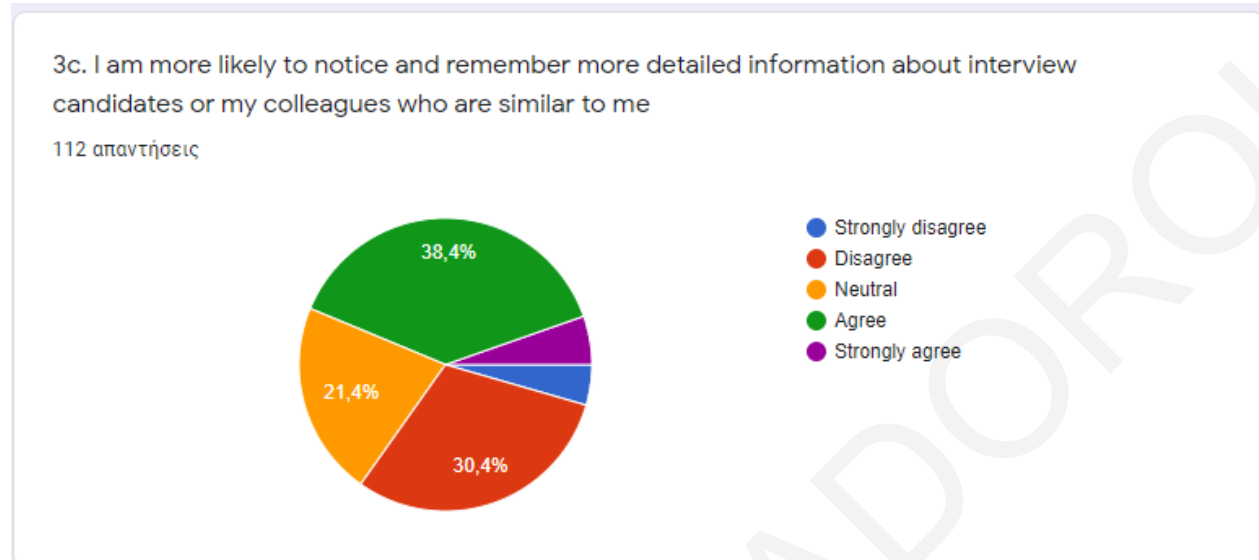
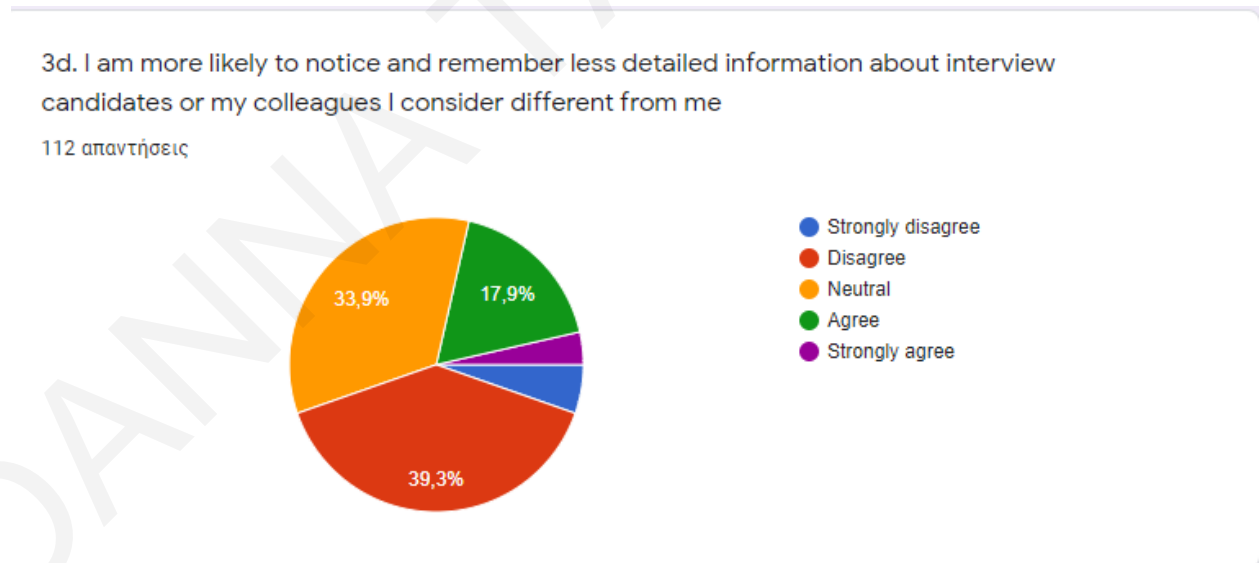


Image 7: I am more likely to notice and remember less detailed information about interview candidates or my colleagues I consider different from me



3.1.4 Judgments about the performance of other people

The purpose of questions 4a and 4b was to examine whether participants, according to the literature review, are aware that their judgment about the performance of other people, is influenced by the performance judgments that others have previously made about them or whether they are aware that their judgment about the performance of other people, may be influenced by their mood.

The results showed that the majority of 50% (n = 56) answered that they "disagree" and 12.5% (n=14) answered that they "strongly disagree", while the next most popular answer was "neutral" with a percentage of 19.6% (n=22). It seems that only 17.9% (n=20) of the participants are aware of this bias while no participant chose the answer "strongly agree".

Now as to whether their judgment about the performance of other people is influenced by their mood, the majority argued that 51.8% (n=58) they "disagree" and 17% (n=19) they "strongly disagree", while only 12.5% (n=14) answered that they "agree" and no participant chose the answer "strongly agree".

Image 8: My judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by the performance judgments that others have previously made about me

4a. My judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by the performance judgments that others have previously made about me

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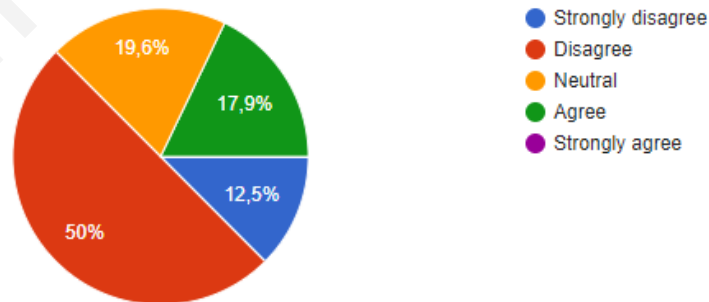
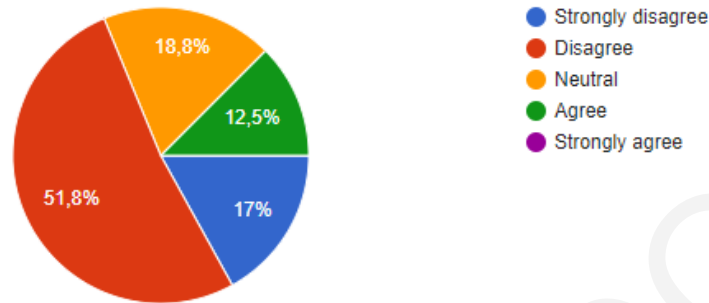


Image 9: My judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by my mood

4b. My judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by my mood

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3.1.5 Unconscious gender bias

The next question was about the gender bias and discrimination against women in terms of promotion and under-representation in positions of power in an organization.

Participants were asked to rate, on a Likert scale, whether they believed that “men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women”, “women who are mothers have the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men”, “women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization” and finally, “women have the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness”.

To the first question, “men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women”, the majority of the participants answered that they “disagree” with a percentage of 33% (n=37) and a percentage of 10.7% (n=12) argued that they “strongly disagree” with this statement. On the contrary, 23.2% (n=26) answered that “agrees” that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women and a 14.3% (n= 16) strongly believe this statement.

To the second question, “women who are mothers have the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men”, the majority of the participants answered that they “disagree” (39.3%, n=44), and a percentage of 10.7% (n=12) they “strongly disagree”. On the other hand, 23.2% (n=26) argued that mothers have the same opportunities for promotion and 8.9% (n= 10) answered that they “strongly agree”.

Image 10: I believe that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women

5a. I believe that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women

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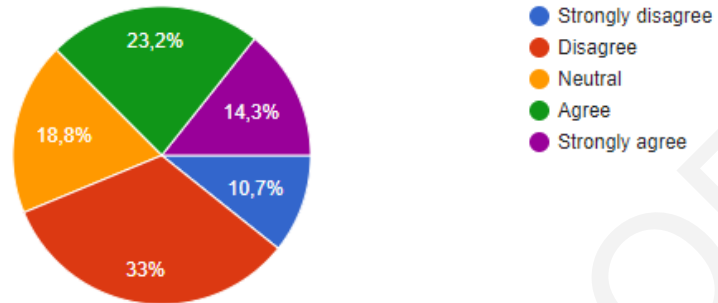
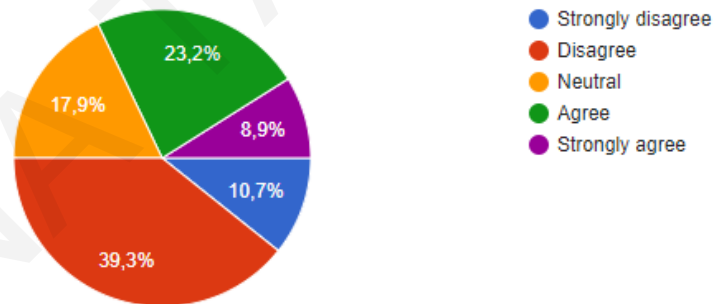


Image 11: I believe that women who are mothers have the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men

5b. I believe that women who are mothers have the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men

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In question 6a, “women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization”, the majority of subjects “strongly agree” with a percentage of 44.6% (n=50) and a percentage of 43.8%, (n = 49) agrees. On the contrary, only 3.6% (n=4) chose “disagree” and 1.8% (n=2) chose “strongly disagree”.

Similar results are observed for the next question, “women have the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness”, where the majority with a percentage of 53.6% (n= 60) answered that they “agree” with this statement and a percentage of 25.9% (n= 29), answered that they “strongly agree”. Again, though at a higher rate, only the 8.9% (n=10) answered that they “disagree” that a woman has the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness and only 1.8% (n=2) answered that they “strongly disagree”.

Image 12: I believe that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization

6a. I believe that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization

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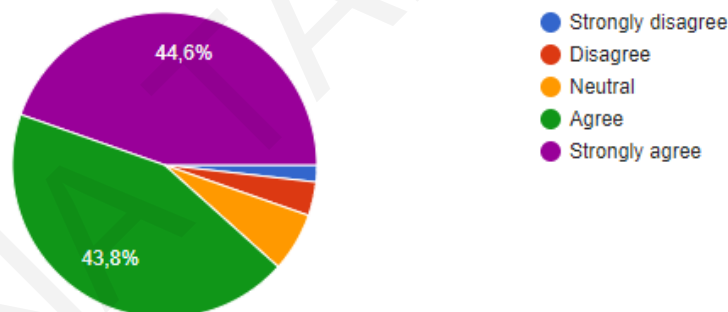
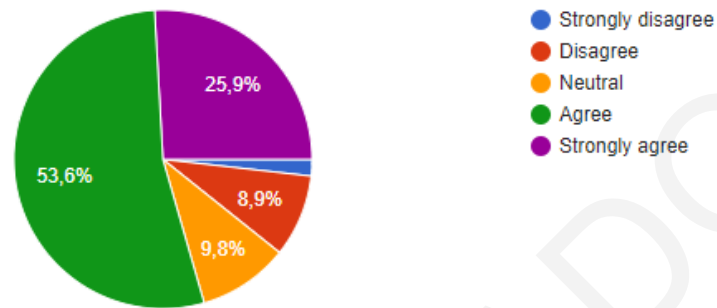


Image 13: I believe that women have the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness

6b. I believe that women have the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness

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3.1.6 Changes in the workplace

The participants of the research were asked to state how they deal with the various changes that occur in their workplace. Specifically, we asked them to state their degree of agreement with the following phrases:

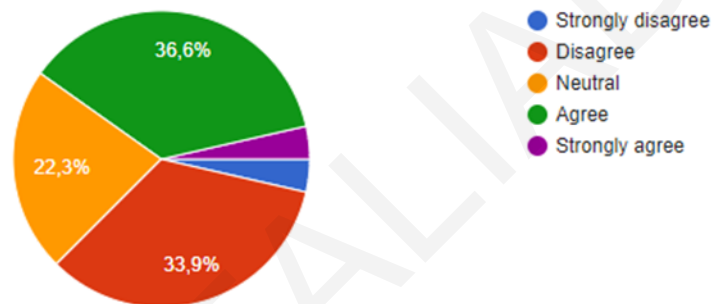
- When faced with a change in the workplace, I prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible
- I am afraid of change because I am worried I might fail
- I opposed change as I fear I may lose my job
- Even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain

For the first phrase, "when faced with a change in the workplace, I prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible", the majority of subjects stated that they "agree" (36.6%, n=41), while 33.9% (n=38) answered that they "disagree". It is important to mention that a 22.3% (n=25) responded "neutral" to this phrase.

Image 14: When faced with a change in the workplace, I prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible

7a. When faced with a change in the workplace, I prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible

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For the next two phrases the subjects seem to "disagree". Specifically, for the phrase "I am afraid of change because I am worried I might fail" the disagreement rate is 41.1% (n=46) and a percentage of 17.9% (n=20) they "strongly disagree", while for the phrase "I opposed change as I fear I may lose my job", the disagreement rate reached 59.8% (n=67).

Image 15: I am afraid of change because I am worried I might fail

7b. I am afraid of change because I am worried I might fail

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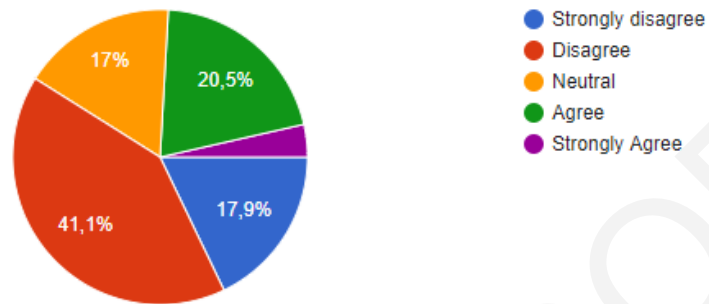
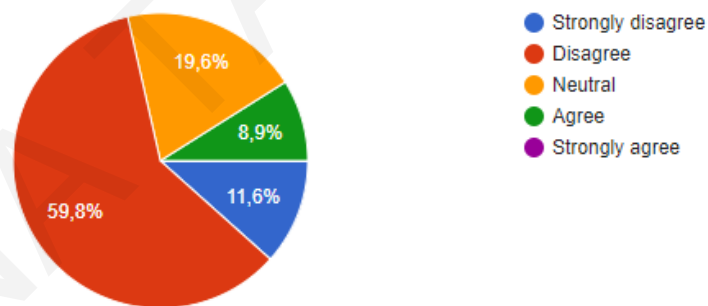


Image16: I opposed change as I fear I may lose my job

7c. I opposed change as I fear I may lose my job

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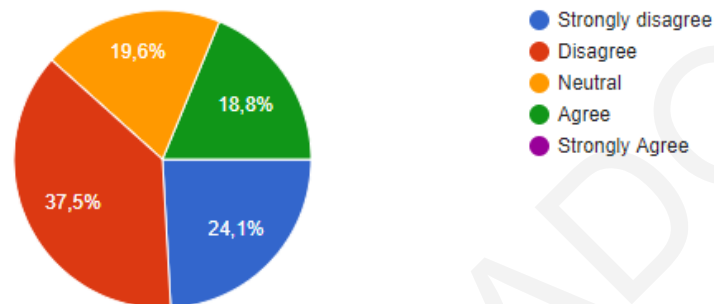


Finally, for the last phrase “even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain” the majority of the participants again disagreed with a percentage of 37.5% (n= 42), while a high percentage of 24.1% (n=27), stated that they “strongly disagree”.

Image 17: Even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain

7d. Even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain

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3.1.7 The just world fallacy and the spotlight effect

The last two questions were about excessive effort and sacrifice at work and participants were asked to state their degree of agreement with the following phrases:

- “I believe that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded”
- “I believe that if I put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized”

In the first question, the majority of subjects "agree" in a percentage of 35.7% (n=40). Nevertheless, a percentage of 29.50% (n = 33) chose the answer "neutral" while the third most popular answer was "disagree" at 18.88% (n = 21).

In the second question, “I believe that if I put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized”, the results are similar since the majority "agrees" in a percentage of 36.6% (n=41), a percentage of 29.50% (n = 33) chose the answer "neutral" and finally the third most popular answer was again "disagree" at 19.60% (n = 22).

Image 18: I believe that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded

8a. I believe that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded

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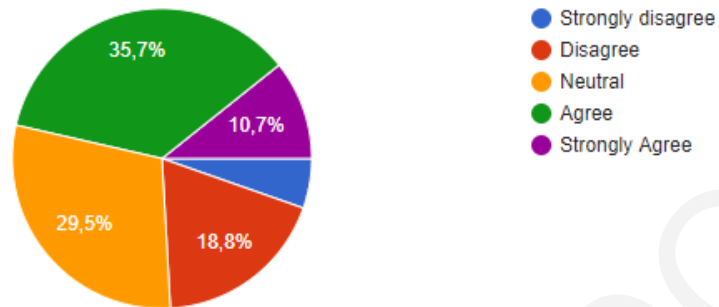
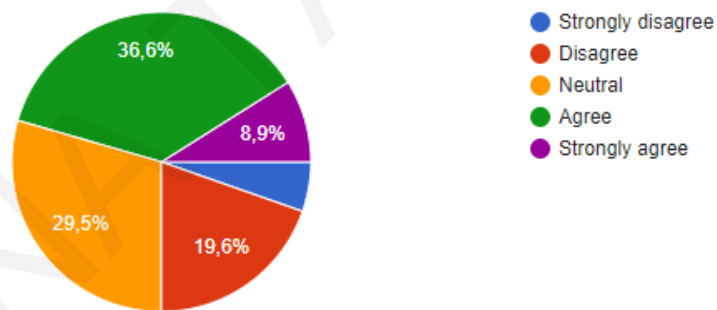


Image 19: I believe that if I put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized

8b. I believe that if I put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized

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3.2 Median

3.2.1 The median of the gender

The following data processing concerns the median of responses regarding the gender of the subjects. The subjects were divided into two groups (female-male).

The answers to questions 5a “I believe that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women” [F (1,111) =5,232, p= .024] and 6a “I believe that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization” [F (1,111) =4,888, p= .029] gave a statistically significant result.

The results showed that women (m= 3.30), compared to men (m=2.71), were more likely to claim that men have more opportunities to receive promotion compared to women. Nevertheless, it is striking that men (m=4.47) believe to a greater extent that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization (m=4.10).

3.2.2 The median of the position

The same analysis was done for the position held by the subjects in their workplace (manager-employee).

Statistically significant result is observed in questions 4a “My judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by the performance judgments that others have previously made about me” [F (1,111) =4,070, p= .046], 7c “I opposed change as I fear I may lose my job” [F (1,111) =4,393, p= .038], 7d “Even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain” [F (1,111) =4,102, p= .045], 8a “I believe that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded” [F (1,111) =8,907, p= .004] and finally 8b “I believe that if I put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized” [F (1,111) =11,335, p= .001].

In the first case it appears, that the subjects working as employees (m=2.75), their judgment about the performance of other people, are more affected by the performance judgments that others have previously made about them, compared to managers (m=2.23).

The same goes for the next question, since employees ($m=2.47$) oppose change more as they fear they may lose their job, compared to managers ($m=2.03$) who are less afraid of losing their job. On the contrary, in the question “even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain”, managers ($m=2.94$), would not search for another job, compared to employees ($m=2.36$) who would change their jobs more easily.

Finally, managers ($m=4.10$, $m=4.16$ respectively) believe more that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded and if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized, compared to employees ($m=3.31$, $m=3.27$ respectively).

4. Discussion

The first hypothesis of the investigation examined the factors that affect the participant in forming the first impression of his / her colleague or candidate during interviews and if their overall impression of this person affects how they feel and think about his or her character. Based on the statistical results of the survey, the subjects are not aware of the fact that a few seconds are enough to form the first impression about their colleagues or candidates during interviews, but they seem to be aware that their overall impression of this person affects how they feel and think about his or her character.

The second research hypothesis examined job descriptions and whether they would influence subjects' decision to send or not their CVs or influence the decision of the managers on which candidate is the most suitable. From the answers to the questionnaire it is concluded that the subjects are not affected by job descriptions.

In the third hypothesis it was examined whether the individuals realize how important it is for them to be sure that the new person who will be added to the team is the right one and they will like him/her. The results showed that the majority of subjects consider it extremely significant and this statement is reinforced by the next most popular answer, which is the “strongly agree”. Then, I focused on the “in-group” bias which can lead people to misjudge a person or make a wrong decision. Therefore, I examined the tendency of individuals to evaluate a person more positively when they share similarities with him/her in respect to several different dimensions, including values, habits and beliefs. It seems that the subjects of the research are aware of this situation. In addition, as I mentioned above, individuals have the tendency to notice and remember more detailed information about interview candidates or their colleagues similar to themselves, while on the other hand, they notice and remember less information about candidates or colleagues they see as different to themselves. It is interesting that the subjects seem to accept the fact that they notice and remember more detailed information about people similar to themselves, while not accepting the fact that they notice and remember less information about candidates or colleagues they see as different to themselves.

The next research hypothesis concerned judgment about the performance of other people and what can affect it. It seems that the subjects are not aware that the performance judgments that others have previously made about them, affect their judgment about the performance of other

people. Furthermore, it seems that they are not aware that their judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by their mood.

It was then examined whether individuals were aware of unconscious gender bias. In particular the subjects were asked to state their degree of agreement on whether they believe that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women and whether they believe that women who are mothers have the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men. In both cases, the majority do not agree with these statements, so they are not aware that men are actually more likely to receive promotion compared to women, but are aware of the fact that women who are mothers have not the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men.

The sixth hypothesis refers again to unconscious gender bias and in the underrepresentation of women in position of power. The subjects clearly stated that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization and that women have the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness.

To test the seventh hypothesis, subjects were asked to indicate the extent to which they could cope with the changes in their workplace. Based on what I mentioned in the literature review, individuals tend to prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible when they have to deal with a change, because they are afraid that they will fail or because they are afraid of losing their job. The subjects seemed to agree that when they have to deal with a change, prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible, but they deny that the reasons for this, are due to their fear of failure or because they are afraid of losing their job. Finally, claim that if they were not satisfied with their salary, they would search for another job regardless of whether the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain.

The last hypothesis concerned the fact whether the subject believes that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded and whether they believe that if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized. From the answers it seems that the subjects agree with both statements.

It is interesting to mention the results of the test made on the median of the gender, which showed that women compared to men, were more likely to claim that men have more opportunities

to receive promotion compared to women, but on the contrary, men believe to a greater extent that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization. The test made on the median of the position, showed that employees' judgement about the performance of other people, are more affected by the performance judgments that others have previously made about them, compared to managers, employees oppose change more as they fear they may lose their job, compared to managers who are less afraid of losing their job, but in the question "even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain", managers would not search for another job, compared to employees who would change their jobs more easily.

Finally, managers believe more that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded and if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized, compared to employees.

5. Solutions

5.1 What organizations can do to minimize unconscious bias in their workplace

Without a doubt, there are many identified unconscious biases, making it difficult for organizations to deal with them effectively. For many organizations, however, identifying as many as possible and eliminating them has become a high priority. In this chapter, I will present what organizations can do to effectively prevent unconscious bias from influencing their organization's practices and policies, as well as the perception, behavior, and decision-making of their employees in the workplace.

The first step and probably the most important is to offer awareness training and label the types of bias that are likely to occur in the workplace. It is vital for employees to know exactly what the unconscious biases are and that everyone has them, because by labeling them, employees will be able to bring them to the conscious level and be aware of how these biases can affect organization's practices and policies such as decision making, hiring, promotions, compensation etc. Awareness training, according to Stephens (2015), gives the ability to employees to recognize their own biases and how to deal with them in everyday decision making. As the Wall street Journal argued, 20% of large U.S. companies, provide unconscious bias training to their employees, and it is expected that in the next five years, 50% of large U.S. companies will offer it (Giang & Olson, 2015).

According to Moore (2018), Google are implementing unconscious bias training, delivered as a sixty to ninety minute in-person workshop with voluntary participation with the aim to help the company make better people decisions in hiring, evaluating and promoting employees. The training gives the opportunity to employees to learn how to communicate more inclusively and also it help them to understand the biological reasons humans develop biases and how they affect organization's decisions.

After implementing the unconscious bias training, organizations in order to examine if the training works, they need to use data-driven evaluations. Google said that it gathers data through experiments, using test groups and control groups. For example, it compared surveys of employees who participated in face-to-face Unconscious Bias Training workshops, ones who watched self-study videos of the same workshop, and ones who received no training at all (Moore, 2018).

The second step is to change the culture of the organization if is necessary. As I mentioned above, due to the “hire like me” bias, which is observed in the early stages of the hiring process, that is, the interview process, interviewers tend to evaluate more positively candidates that are more similar to them in respect to several different dimensions, including values, habits and beliefs. To avoid this, organizations need to set predetermined interview questions in order to encourage interviewers to focus on relevant factors. As Derous et al. (2016), argued this helps interviewers to gather more comparable information about all applicants and also reduces the likelihood of selection decisions being made based on biases. Additionally, it is important interview panels to be diverse.

Regarding the promotion process, decisions should also be made by diverse panels and organizations need to establish clear criteria for promotions to reduce biases in the decision-making process. Decision-makers should ensure that their promotion and reward decisions are fair and transparent.

Another important bias that organizations have to deal with is the status quo bias, where individuals prefer to do nothing or maintain previous decisions without a change. However, nowadays, the world is constantly changing and this means organizations and individuals need to develop the capability to change.

People oppose changes because they prefer to stay in what they already know. They do not want to take risks. One explanation of this according to Samuelson and Zeckhauser (1988) is because the future is always considered uncertain. By taking risk, there is the possibility to fail, something that people are afraid of and also people are fearing of hard work after the changes (Lee & Roberts, 2009). Furthermore, people are afraid of changes due to the “endowment effect”, a situation where people do not want to give up what they have (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988 & Baron, 2008).

When changes are introduced at workplace, individuals tend to fear especially in situations that require new skills because they are afraid that they will not succeed to cope with the changes and they doubt themselves that they are able to continue to do a good work.

Organizations to beat the status quo they need to have capable leaders, who can lead by examples by doing what they say and they are capable to change the organization's culture. To accomplish that, communication is the key. Employees need to be told why is important to change and give them the opportunity to participate in the planning that brings about the changes in the organization and make the employees know that they are a part of change. By doing this, as Agarwal & Ferratt (2001) argued, will help employees to deal with their stress. In addition, it is important organizations to recognize and reward those who with their behavior support change and manage to adapt to it.

Now in terms of discrimination against women, if organizations want to create a positive climate in their workplace that supports gender diversity, it is vital to change their organizational culture. First of all, as I mentioned above, unconscious gender bias are observed in the workplace. To reduce them, employers and employees must be aware of these bias and create motivation to change this situation. Organizations need to find ways to get their employees to start challenging their assumptions by organizing training programs, in which they will demonstrate why and how unconscious knowledge can lead to bias at work, how they can limit personal effectiveness and have negative effects on them and others, as well as the consequences of stigmatization which women experience in their workplace. Bohnet (2016), points out that many companies have invested in diversity training to change attitudes and behaviors but the impact of these training were insufficient because diversity training programs have not targeted unconscious bias. Instead, Diversity Education focused on deliberate, conscious thinking.

In addition, organizations need to implement compensatory strategies in order to identify "bias hot spots" where bias is likely to have negative effects on judgements and decisions (selection, promotion). It is also important to encourage slower thinking. According to Kahneman (2011), there are two types of thoughts, which are fast and slow thoughts. Fast thoughts are based on the intuition of the person, as a result of which many times it leads to the wrong solution of the problem. Then, slow thinking is activated, which is able to support a more detailed processing of the problem. Organizations need to train their employees to think slower in order to reduce unconscious bias by learning them techniques to consciously practice slow thinking.

Without a doubt, it is vital for the organizations if they want to create a positive climate in the workplace to change their systems and processes. For instance, they need to redesign the selection and promotion systems in order to minimize the awareness of gender through the application of blind selection process and blind evaluation. In addition, because job interviews cannot be blind, organization must train the panel to be aware of these bias and learn strategies to reduce the impact of their unconscious bias and to not distort their perception when making decisions. Finally selection and promotion systems must include behaviors that cover both male and female traits.

If organizations aim to increase diversity, they need to find ways to motivate managers to achieve this goal. For instance, managers who select more diverse personnel, the company will reward them with bonuses. In addition, because women spend a lot of time raising their children, organizations need to implement more family-friendly HR policies to relieve work-family conflict. It is important, organizations to realize that their employees have personal life beyond their work life. If they realize that, then they will be able to create more flexible work arrangements, which involve flexible schedules, telecommuting, compressed work weeks, job-shares and part-time work. Could also include childcare center run by the firm and of course paid maternity leave. In this way they would be able to improve the retention of working mothers and relieve them of stress. Organizations, should not be the ones to decide whether a pregnant woman is able to continue to work in a particular job. That decision should only be made by the pregnant employee. By applying the above, companies will be able to greatly reduce gender discrimination and increase gender equality. Finally, closing with the flexible work arrangements and having already mentioned maternity leave, a major mistake some organizations make, is emphasizing maternity leave as opposed to paternity leave. When there is clearly more emphasis on maternity leave over paternity leave, and male do not have the same privileges as the female, a perception is automatically created that the woman is the one who has to take on the family responsibilities.

In terms of recruitment and promotion decisions, in order to reduce discrimination in those policies, a job analysis should be performed to determine what knowledge skills and abilities the decision- making positions need. As I mentioned above, one reason that explains the under-representation of women in positions of power is the job description that is used in order to find the appropriate candidate who best fits in these positions and the performance evaluations, which decide if an employee will be promoted or not. The words used to describe the characteristics that

the person in positions of power should have, are words that are associated with common gender stereotypes and these position, most of the time, are often described in words that are associated with the male gender. Therefore, if companies want to reduce discrimination against women, they should adjust their job descriptions with characteristics of the ideal employee for that position. The expectations about characteristics should base on accurate knowledge of the job and not gender stereotypes about the job. On the other, to reduce discrimination in performance evaluations, HR policies should use reliable measures based on objective performance expectations.

But just as important as I have already mentioned, is the visibility of women in hold key positions. Because as Oakley (2000), argues, women are often feel uncomfortable in decision-making positions when they have attained them. To tackle this problem and help increase women's visibility, organizations should apply training programs available to women, with the sole aim of increasing the confidence and professional aspiration of women in their organization.

Finally, having already developed what organizations need to do to create a positive climate in the organization that supports gender diversity and which are vital to implement if we are to see an increase in the number of women holding positions of power, nevertheless, it is good to emphasize that women themselves will have to make some changes in order to claim what they deserve. First of all, they have to believe that they are worth claiming positions of power, to forget the gender stereotypes, the social roles that society imposed on them, to create a leadership identity and develop a sense of purpose, setting goals that not only align with their personal values but also advance the collective good. By doing this, women will manage to step outside of their comfort zone, they will believe in themselves even more and most importantly their colleagues will begin to recognize that a woman can fit into such a demanding role.

“We [women] hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in”.

Sheryl Sandberg, COO, Facebook

6. Implications of the study

Having identified some variables that both individuals and organizations may alter to reduce unconscious bias in the workplace, this study and its findings, cited above, demonstrate the importance of studying this phenomenon.

This research focus especially on implications of unconscious bias on a variety of HR practices and policies such as in the recruitment and selection process, in performance appraisal and promotion decisions. The study of unconscious bias enables us to know the extent to which decision-makers rely on stereotypes rather than on personalized information when they have to deal with decision-making in the workplace. It is vital for every organization, when their decision makers want to make a fair decision, they need to be able to avoid stereotyping. According to Fiske (1993) and Kunda (1990), if organizations want to increase decision makers' motivation to make accurate decisions, they must impose certain conditions such as justifying their judgments to others and their decisions to be made public. Furthermore, decision makers must expect that their judgments will be evaluated and it is necessary to have an interest in the outcome such that their own success depends on the decision. Finally, organizations must ensure that decisions makers are aware of organizational values regarding equity. There is evidence that awareness training gives the ability to employees to recognize their own biases and how to deal with them in everyday decision making.

The findings of the study, also have implications for changes in the workplace. As I have already mentioned, people oppose changes because they prefer to stay in what they already know. They do not want to take risks because by taking risk, there is the possibility to fail, something that people are afraid of. This research explains how important is for organizations to have capable leaders, who can lead by examples and communicate the organization's culture. It is vital for employees to know why is important to change and give them the opportunity to participate in the planning of the change to help them deal with their stress.

In addition, this study has focused on implication for discrimination against women in the workplace. The study emphasizes the need for organizations to organize training programs, in which they will demonstrate why and how unconscious knowledge can lead to bias at work, how they can limit personal effectiveness and have negative effects on them and others, as well as the consequences of stigmatization which women experience in their workplace.

Finally, it highlights the importance of promoting women in hold key positions. It emphasizes that organizations should apply training programs available to women, with the sole aim of increasing the confidence and professional aspiration of women in their organization and create a positive climate that supports gender diversity.

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7. Limitations of the study

One limitation of the survey is the fact that there is a big difference in the percentage of employees compared to the percentage of managers, i.e. the survey questionnaire was answered by more employees and fewer managers, women in relation to men and in the age group where the 22-30 gathered the most answers. This means that the research may focus more on the study of unconscious bias in the workplace of these groups (employees, women, 22-30 years old) and less on the rest of the groups. The sample of the other groups, that is, may not be so representative.

Another limitation that we could mention is the fact that in several answers, many subjects chose the answer "neutral", making it difficult to draw strong conclusions about some statements, especially for the statements that had to do with creating first impressions, retaining information about their colleagues and recognizing and rewarding in the workplace.

8. Suggestions for future research

This study has a focus to examine whether research subjects are aware of unconscious bias and their influence on decision-making. However, there are still many issues that could be explored in the future regarding unconscious bias. Firstly, further understanding the conditions under which different unconscious bias occur would be useful. Secondly, another interesting topic could be to try to explain why HR professionals create job descriptions that could prevent some people from sending their resume to organizations and how we could create them to prevent recruiters from making mistakes and making decisions that may have been influenced due to bias. Finally, in terms of unconscious gender bias, it would be very interesting to examine how gender stereotypes have changed over the years for individuals, that is, whether gender bias increases or decreases after certain amounts of time.

9. Conclusion

The main objective of this research was to identify the unconscious bias which we encounter every day in the workplace and which affect our perception and decision making. The ways in which these bias operate and affect individuals' perception in the workplace are described above.

To examine the research hypotheses I created based on the literature review, a questionnaire to examine whether research subjects are aware of unconscious bias and their influence on decision-making.

From the results of the questionnaire, we conclude that the subjects "admitted" that many times, their perception is altered and decision making is affected. However, in some cases it seems that the subjects are not aware of the influence of the bias, as they claim that they do not influence them in making decisions or influence them to a minimal extent.

In terms of forming the first impression, it seems on the one hand the subjects are not aware of the fact that a few seconds are enough to form the first impression about other person but on the other hand the subjects seems to be fully aware that their overall impression of this person affects how they feel and think about his or her character.

According to a research conducted in 2005 in the United States if job descriptions for job positions in an organization are described with words are associated with the male gender, then males will be more encouraged to send their CV for these position as opposed to women, and beyond that, men will be considered as the ideal choice to fill these positions, resulting in the unconscious bias would work against women. In our research it seems that the subjects are not aware of this influence.

The research also shows that subjects are aware of the "in-group bias" after stating that they tend to evaluate a person more positively when they share similarities with him/her in respect to several different dimensions, including values, habits and beliefs. However, as far as the "hire like me" bias is concerned, the subjects seem to accept the fact that they notice and remember more detailed information about people similar to themselves, while not accepting the fact that they notice and remember less information about candidates or colleagues they see as different to themselves.

Then the subjects of our research state that performance judgments that others have previously made about them do not affect their judgment of other people's performance nor are they affected by their mood. This contradicts what Latham (2008) and Tversky and Kahneman (1974) argue: “when people have to make formal judgements about the performance of others, those judgements are influenced by the formal performance judgements that others have previously made about them”. This is because performance appraisals typically involve estimates of value under uncertainty. Therefore, people use anchors and adjustment heuristics, in order to have a guidepost that will help them to evaluate. In addition to the effect of anchoring, Sinclair (1988) argues that raters are too generous when in a good mood and not generous enough when in a bad one.

Regarding unconscious gender bias and the view that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women and that women who are mothers have not the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men, the majority do not agree with the first statement but are aware of the fact that women who are mothers have not the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men. Then, regarding the underrepresentation of women in position of power, the subjects clearly stated that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization and that women have the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness.

Another bias we encounter in the workplace is the “status quo bias”, where “leads people to prefer things to stay the same, or that they change as little as possible”, or in addition, to choose to do nothing or maintaining on someone’s current or previous decision without a change (Sherfin, 2008, Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). This is because of the fact that people are afraid of failing or because they are afraid of losing their job. The subjects of the research seemed to agree that when they have to deal with a change, prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible, but they deny that the reasons for this, are due to their fear of failure or because they are afraid of losing their job. Furthermore as Samuelson and Zeckhauser (1988) argue, employees in some uncertain circumstances stick to the status quo bias such as the same low paying job, because the process of searching for a better one is slow, uncertain and costly (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). The subject in our research claim that if they were not satisfied with their salary, they would search for another job regardless of whether the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain.

Subjects were then asked to state whether they believe that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded and whether they believe that if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized. From the answers it seems that the subjects agree with both statements. This shows us that the subjects confirm “the just world fallacy” (Lerner, 1980) bias, according to which people have the tendency to receive the rewards, recognition, and punishment they deserve. Therefore, individuals assume that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded. In addition, they confirm the “spotlight effect” (Gilovich et al., 2000), where individuals tend to overestimate the extent to which their actions are likely to be noticed by other people, thus, due to this effect, individuals believe that if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized.

Finally, the research showed that women compared to men, were more likely to claim that men have more opportunities to receive promotion compared to women, but on the contrary, men believe to a greater extent that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization. In a comparison made between managers and employees, the research showed that employees’ judgement about the performance of other people, are more affected by the performance judgments that others have previously made about them, compared to managers, employees oppose change more as they fear they may lose their job, compared to managers who are less afraid of losing their job, but in the question “even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain”, managers would not search for another job, compared to employees who would change their jobs more easily. Managers believe more that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded and if they put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized, compared to employees.

In conclusion, I believe that through this research it appears that making mistakes is a common phenomenon in our daily lives as well as that most of the time we are not aware of the mistakes we make.

The individual is not a model of rationality. As Kahneman (2013) states, "System 2 has limited capabilities as well as the knowledge to which it has access". Therefore, people do not necessarily think correctly when drawing conclusions. They are led to mistakes either because of their wrong intuition or because they simply do not know anything better "(p.651).

"We may be blind to the obvious, but we are also blind to our blindness" (Kahneman, 2013, p. 45).

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11. Appendix

Unconscious bias in the workplace and their impact on employees"

This questionnaire is part of my thesis, which is conducted at the Department of Human Resource Management of University of Cyprus. The aim of the research is to study how the way we think affects our behaviour when making decisions in our workplace. You will not need more than 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The data of the questionnaire is used purely for research purposes and your participation in the research is anonymous and optional.

Thank you for your participation.
Ioanna Taliadorou
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Gender *

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Age *

- 22-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 50+

I work in the: *

- Public sector
 - Private sector
-

I work as a manager / an employee in the organization: *

- Manager
 - Employee
-

1a. A few seconds are enough to form the first impression about my colleagues or candidates during interviews *

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

1b. My overall impression of a person affects how I feel and think about his or her character *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

2. The words used in a job description to find the candidate who best fits the vacancy, such as "friendly personality" or "achievement-oriented personality", can prevent me from sending my CV or influence the decision on which candidate is the most suitable *

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

3a. It is important for me to be sure that the new person that will be added to the team is the right one and I will like him/her *

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
-

3b. The more similarities the new person has with the team (including values, habits and beliefs), the more positively I will evaluate him/her *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

3c. I am more likely to notice and remember more detailed information about interview candidates or my colleagues who are similar to me *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

3d. I am more likely to notice and remember less detailed information about interview candidates or my colleagues I consider different from me *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

4a. My judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by the performance judgments that others have previously made about me *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

4b. My judgment about the performance of other people are influenced by my mood *

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

5a. I believe that men are more likely to receive promotion compared to women *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

5b. I believe that women who are mothers have the same opportunities for promotion as women who are not mothers or men *

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

6a. I believe that women are suitable to hold a position of power in an organization *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

6b. I believe that women have the required characteristics for positions of power such as a forceful behavior and directness *

- Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
-

7a. When faced with a change in the workplace, I prefer things to stay the same or change as little as possible *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7b. I am afraid of change because I am worried I might fail *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

7c. I opposed change as I fear I may lose my job *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7d. Even if I was not satisfied with my salary, I would not search for another job because the process of searching a better one is slow and uncertain *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

8a. I believe that excessive efforts and sacrifice at work will be rewarded *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

8b. I believe that if I put more effort and work more hours, these actions will be recognized *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree